



The free life of Peter Clowes

Section Two, cover story

Win Damon Hill's Renault Spider



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Tory defeat over wives' pension split

All-party revolt in Lords upsets Mackay bill

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

The Government suffered a humiliating defeat in the Lords last night as Tory rebels - including four former ministers - joined forces with opposition peers to vote to allow divorced women to share their husbands' pensions.

Intensive government efforts to "whip" Conservative peers to vote against Labour amendments to the essentially non-party Family Law Bill failed, by 178 votes to 150.

The changes, moved by Baroness Hollis of Heigham, Labour's Lords social security spokeswoman, seek to enshrine the principle of so-called "pension splitting" in the law, leaving detailed consideration of the means of putting it into practice.

The all-party victory brings the widely supported reform, which would also benefit less well-off husbands, forward by several years. It is unlikely to be reversed when the Bill goes back to the Commons.

The proposal would enable divorcing couples to divide, pension-wise, one of the most significant assets of a marriage - at the time of divorce instead of having their financial affairs entangled for years.

Some divorced wives are at risk of being driven into income support in their old age because their former husbands might die early - sometimes before a pension can be drawn at all.

A delighted Lady Hollis said that the move, which was backed by the pensions industry, the Law Society and the Mothers' Union, would save many divorced people from penury in old age.

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While a number of supporters of yesterday's amendment were content for the details to be examined in a Green Paper consultation, they were determined to have the principle included on the face of the legislation to ensure progress was not thwarted for perhaps several years after the next election.

The wording of Lady Hollis's amendments might involve the Government in the embarrassment of having to help redraft them, and Lord Mackay of Ardglenish pointedly emphasised that the Government's opponents would be voting for the most sweeping "Henry VIII" enabling clauses imaginable.

But ministers and business managers conspicuously failed to declare any intention of seeking to reverse the deficit when the Bill reaches the Commons. Commons whips are expected carefully to gauge the level of support, particularly in the light of the risk of embarrassing rebellions on other parts of the Bill.

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Lady Hollis: Led revolt against Family Law Bill

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Aerial battle: Protesters being removed from a treehouse yesterday Photograph: Stuart Cook

Whitehall fears Scott 'witch hunt'

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

Civil servants criticised in the Scott report on arms to Iraq have been warned that they could face disciplinary action despite the refusal of Government ministers to accept any blame themselves.

In his report, Sir Richard Scott criticised dozens of civil servants across Whitehall for drafting misleading parliamentary answers and letters; not reading vital intelligence reports; not taking sufficient care over Public Interest Immunity Certificates, the so-called "gagging" orders; giving poor advice to ministers; and not paying enough attention to export licence applications.

Among those on the receiving end from Scott were Eric Boston, now the Department of Trade and Industry's director in the East Midlands but then the senior official responsible for export controls. Scott said his witness statement in the Matrix Churchill case was inaccurate and he knew that to be so.

Another official heavily slated in the report was Ian McDonald, best known for keeping the press informed about the progress of the Falklands war but head of the Ministry of Defence's export services section during the arms to Iraq affair. Mr McDonald is accused by Scott of showing "inattention... consistent with his general approach to management".

At the Foreign Office, David Gore-Booth, soon to be High Commissioner in India, is criticised for failing to face up to the fact that deficiencies in his department might have contributed to the lamentable fact that a misleading submission had been placed before [William] Hague, then Foreign Office minister.

Whitehall unions - including the First Division Association, which represents top officials, and the new PTC union, which covers the middle-ranking grades, fear a witch-hunt against

these and other, less senior officials criticised in the report.

Their fears have been raised by indications from senior government officials that some civil servants could be disciplined. Referring to Monday's victory in the Scott debate by just one vote, one Government source said that ministers had had their trial and had been acquitted - civil servants had not.

A Cabinet Office spokeswoman said yesterday that "in the light of the report, departments will be looking to see if there is any reason for disciplinary action".

This followed a parliamentary answer from John Major in which he did not rule out punishing officials. "If there are cases where disciplinary action is considered appropriate, this would be carried out under normal departmental disciplinary procedures," he said.

So concerned are the unions that they are urgently seeking reassurances from the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robin Butler, and Roger Freeman, the civil service minister, that officials will not be disciplined. The unions plan to discuss the threat and any possible retaliatory action at their joint council meeting next week.

Civic Brook, joint general secretary of the PTC union, said: "If civil servants are involved and our members are affected we are outraged."

Another Whitehall union general secretary said he understood that senior officials in the Department of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Defence and Customs and Excise were in the firing line. "This is double standards of the highest order if they pursue hapless civil servants and ministers get off scot-free." He claimed it was "cock-eyed logic" for the Government to discipline officials.

Unions fear those criticised may be punished in less overt ways, being overlooked for promotion, marked down for performance pay and transferred to dead-end postings.

Hopes of an 'imminent' IRA ceasefire dashed

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland correspondent

The IRA and Sinn Fein yesterday signalled that a renewal of the IRA ceasefire is not imminent in the wake of the Anglo-Irish summit which set 10 June as the date for all-party talks in Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams described the prospect of a ceasefire in the next few days as "most unlikely". He was speaking after an unusual meeting at which he met IRA leaders in company with the leader of the SDLP, John Hume.

The republican leaders appear, following the summit, to be moving between rejection of the offer of its offer of and accept-

talks. The signs are that the former may be impossible to them, while they are not yet ready for the latter.

An IRA statement, issued after the meeting took refuge in Delphic generalities, making no reference to the possibility of a ceasefire.

It said: "We pointed out to Mr Hume and Mr Adams that the failure by the British Government to put in place inclusive negotiations free from preconditions, the abuse of the peace process by the British over 18 months, and the absence of an effective and democratic approach capable of providing an irrevocable momentum towards a just and lasting peace in Ireland were the critical elements which led to the failure, thus far, of the Irish peace process."

John Major last night reacted angrily to the IRA army council's statement, describing it as "pathetic" and a "sick joke". Given the text in Bangkok during his trip to the Far East, the Prime Minister declared: "For 25 years the IRA have murdered and bombed. The people of Northern Ireland will be fed up to the back teeth and it is time they realised that democracy will go on with or without them."

An intensive round of talks is due to start in Belfast on Monday. Sinn Fein is to have input into these via meetings

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13 arrests after dawn raid to evict bypass protesters

CLARE GARNER

Bailiffs in riot helmets, accompanied by hundreds of police officers, yesterday staged a pre-dawn raid to evict demonstrators from the largest and best-defended camps on the Newbury bypass route.

Thirteen anti-road campaigners were arrested and several trampled underfoot in clashes between demonstrators and police horses at the Pixie Village site in Snelmore Common, Berkshire. The redoubtable Lady Jeanine Barber lashed out at police she claimed had "manhandled" her. Protesters dumped buckets of human waste over unsuspecting police officers.

By the end of the day, contractors had cleared a large part of the area, designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, including the makeshift ground camps, and had "taken into custody" a network of underground tunnels.

The operation began at 3am, when protesters were literally caught napping by the 100-plus uniformed police who crept up on their nine tree-houses.

Bailiffs set about clearing out the camps on the ground, heaping belongings into black bin-liners. Trouble flared when two giant lorries arrived. Police moved in with eight horses to clear the way and several people were crushed in the mule.

Lady Barber, of Inkpen, near Newbury, claimed police used "brutal tactics" in getting her out of the way. "The strength of feeling here is such that local people will simply not put up with these strong-arm tactics from the police," she said.

Onlooker Hugh Warwick said: "The residents' young children were screaming and the horses so skittish as to be nearly out of control."

Richard Stephens, the countryside warden for Newbury District Council, said: "It's been handled really badly. The use of horses was appalling."

However, police condemned the protesters after two "deliberate" five-foot wooden mantraps, armed with five-inch long nails, were found.

Kenyans leave Windies stumped

HUGH BATESON

Kenya joined the Faroe Islands, Colchester United and Buster Douglas yesterday when they produced one of the great sporting upsets of all time, defeating the West Indies in cricket's World Cup.

Their 73-run win over a side including the world's greatest batsman, Brian Lara, in Pune was ranks on sport's Richter scale alongside Colchester's 3-2 defeat of the then invincible Leeds United football team in the 1971 FA Cup, the heavyweight boxer James "Buster" Douglas's knockout of

Mike Tyson in 1990, and the tiny Faroe Islands' European Championship victory over Austria in the same year. It is by far the greatest shock the cricket world has seen.

The West Indies, the leading cricket nation for the best part of 20 years from the mid-Seventies, collapsed in truly spectacular fashion to Kenya's amateur team of salesmen, students and businessmen.

Chasing only a moderate target of 166 they could not even muster 100 runs between them, being bowled out for just 93. Their captain, Richie Richardson, scored five, Lara eight,

Sherwin Campbell four and Keith Arthurton a duck. As they tumbled to 35 for 4, Thai soon became 81 for 8 and the game was up.

Maurice Odumbe, the 25-year-old insurance salesman who captains Kenya, was the star of Africa, taking three wickets with his off-spin and getting a smart run-out with a direct hit on the stumps. "We came to the World Cup to prove that we could play and I think that we did prove that today," he said. "It is like having won the World Cup."

Treatment hope: Finnish discovery prompts search for vaccine that could 'eliminate disease'

Virus linked to cervical cancer

GLENDIA COOPER

Cervical cancer could be drastically reduced by routine testing for a virus when smears are taken, doctors said yesterday.

The virus, which is a common one, infects about one in 20 women, has no symptoms and is generally transmitted through sexual intercourse.

If a vaccine for the virus could be developed the deaths from cervical cancer, currently 500,000 worldwide each year, could be drastically reduced.

The human papillomavirus type 16 (HPV 16) - related to

wart viruses - is said to be "the major factor" linked to cervical cancer according to a paper by researchers in Finland in the *British Medical Journal* today.

Dr Petter Sasieni, epidemiologist for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, said the discovery had great implications for the treatment of the cancer.

"There are both short-term and long-term things we could do which would aid us. We could put a test for the virus into the cervical screening programme."

"We know that the cervical smear test is not perfect, but if

we were testing for the virus we would not miss the proportion that we miss at the moment."

About 4,000 cases of cancer and 18,000 cases of pre-cancer are detected annually in Britain. There were 1,369 deaths from cervical cancer in 1994, most among women who had never been screened. A scheme set up in 1988 and offering a three or five-yearly test to women aged 25 to 64, is estimated to save 1,000 to 2,000 lives a year.

More than 18,000 women in Finland were invited to a health examination between 1966 and 1972 which included asking

about medical history, smoking and taking a blood sample.

All those who had given blood and were free of cancer at the time were followed by public health researchers.

In the study, between 65 and 95 per cent of cervical cancers contained the human papillomavirus DNA. About half of the patients with cervical cancer tested positive for antibodies to HPV16.

Nearly a quarter of the women found to have developed cervical cancer by 1991 had detectable antibodies when the survey started, and addi-

tional women may have become infected during the average time gap of 10 and 23 years between taking the sample and development of the cancer.

If a woman was found to have the virus then, as happened with a positive smear test, she was sent to a gynaecologist for a colposcopy which identifies pre-cancerous tissue by examining the cervix. If pre-cancerous cells were found a small biopsy or laser treatment was carried out.

Although there was thought to be a link between herpes and cancer of the cervix, the study

showed that women with herpes only developed the cancer when the papillomavirus was present.

"The public health impact of controlling precursor cervical lesions and cancer is potentially huge, especially in developing countries where the incidence of cervical cancer approaches 40 per 100,000 women," an editorial in the *BMJ* said.

Dr Sasieni added: "The long-term implication would be if we could develop a vaccine for the virus. Then it would be possible to eliminate cervical cancer altogether."

Fans scale new heights for Cliff...

Armed with flasks of tea, camper gas stoves and provisions, 60 Cliff Richard fans are taking turns "camping out" in sub-zero temperatures in a multi-storey car park in order to buy tickets to see their pop hero.

The fans, who have pitched their tents on the draughty 11th floor of the south car park at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham, want to be among the first in the queue when tickets for *Heathcliff* - Sir Cliff's musical adaptation of Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* - go on sale on Monday.

Obliging Arena staff have given them the go-ahead to stay and they've even opened up lavatory and shower facilities for the hardy fans. More are expected to arrive this weekend to snap up the 4,000 tickets for each of the 16 shows which kick off on 16 October.

One die-hard fan, Phil Finnimore, 46, is planning to spend nearly £900 to buy tickets for himself and his wife, Pat, for all 16 performances. The wages clerk from Holloway Head in Birmingham, said: "People think we're crazy but it's all worth it - Cliff is a fantastic performer and the shows will be brilliant."



Camping out: Die-hard Cliff fan Phil Finnimore keeps warm while waiting for tickets to go on sale for the star's new musical. Photograph: Mike Sharp/Newswest

... but Radio 1 'ban' is no fun for Status Quo

ROS WYNN-JONES

The rock band Status Quo yesterday began legal proceedings against BBC Radio 1, claiming the station has issued a "blanket ban" on producers playing its records. The group's lawyers issued a writ for breach of contract and made an application for a judicial review over whether the station's alleged playlist ban is unlawful.

"Someone seems not to like us at Radio 1," said Francis Rossi, the band's lead singer. "But the staff are not paid to be taste-makers. They should play the current Top 40, which is their remit."

The row is being seen by Radio 1 as a reflection of the changing face of the station: where once Frankie Goes To Hollywood's single "Relax" was banned for referring to oral sex and the Sex Pistols' "God Save The Queen" was deemed un-



Rick Parfitt (left) and Francis Rossi. Photograph: John Voos

suitable for airplay in Silver Jubilee year, bands are now more likely to be censored for being uncool than for swearing, drug references or anarchist lyrics.

"There have been a number of occasions in the past two years

where we have not played records in the charts, including Mr Bobby, Michael Barrymore, Michael Ball, Robson & Jerome and Cliff Richard," said a Radio 1 spokeswoman. "Unlike everyone else Status Quo don't

Censored singles

Five successful songs struck off Radio 1's playlist since 1993:

Robert and Janine: I Believe
John Afford: When Smoke Gets in Your Eyes
Mr Bobby: Mr Bobby
Michael Barrymore: Too Much For One Night
Cliff Richard: Misunderstood Man
Five top songs Radio 1 banned before 1993:

Frankie Goes To Hollywood: Relax
Sex Pistols: God Save The Queen
BHM: Standards: Serious Drugs
Paul McCartney: Give Ireland Back To The Irish
Nirvana: Rape Me

seem to have noticed that there have been a few changes at Radio 1... We do not slavishly follow the Top 40."

A statement from Status Quo, whose collaboration with the Beach Boys "Fun Fun Fun"

went straight into the chart at number 24 this week, said: "Fortunately, as the current charts reflect, we do not depend on Radio 1 alone for our success or indeed our survival."

Declaring that the head of Radio 1's production department, Trevor Damp, had acted unlawfully, the band's statement continued: "Our application for a judicial review is based on the belief that every record of every artist should be given fair consideration and that Mr Damp is abusing his power by unilaterally declaring that Status Quo do not suit the demographic of Radio 1 FM's audience."

The group's guitarist, Rick Parfitt, said: "We don't mind if people don't like our records - many people don't like our records. We all have different tastes and Radio 1, which is run on licence payers' money, should reflect that."

The breach of contract, over

which the band is suing, relates to two verbal agreements Status Quo alleges Radio 1 made in 1992 and 1993. Status Quo claims that when the station was attempting to persuade the band to headline its 25th birthday party and to appear at Radio 1 roadshows the band was promised "all reasonable consideration in relationship to their playlists and broadcasts" as an "inducement".

Although Radio 1 confirmed that "Fun Fun Fun" is not on its playlist, the station no longer ban records, as such. Friday afternoon meetings of producers and Mr Damp decide the records for the next week and the list is published the following Monday, when bands can see whether their single has made the playlist. The station found that banning records, as in the case of "Relax", has had a tendency to catapult a single to number one.

Mrs Howard's 'sorry' by fax

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The curse of the fax machine caused fresh pain at Conservative Central Office yesterday, after a private letter to a Tory rebel from the wife of the Home Secretary, saying his treatment by the party was "monstrous", came out on the wrong fax machine.

Michael Howard faced embarrassment after the personal message of sympathy from Sandra Howard to Peter Thurnham, the MP who resigned the Tory whip in protest at the Scott report, and his wife Sarah, became public when it was inadvertently faxed to a newspaper.

In the letter, Mrs Howard, a former model, wrote: "I do wish you could stay in the fold - that I know sounds ridiculous but we care on personal grounds. I know how poorly you seem treated. It's monstrous but it's not the fault of the whole body of Conservatives, sensible and honest and caring as the vast majority are."

She added: "Michael has no idea that I'm writing [and trying to defend the Government and the party] but he and I have such a bottomless well of admiration for you both and feel so devalued that you should have felt so badly as to not be

able to stay loyal to a great and good party."

Mr Thurnham's secretary was faxing the letter to the MP's wife, but it went by accident to his local newspaper in Bolton. Making the life of a bad job, the Tories circulated the letter at Westminster last night, insisting that it contained nothing to be embarrassed about.

The letter was sent to Mr Thurnham on Saturday, 24 February - two days after he humiliated John Major by resigning within hours of meeting him to hear his appeals for the MP to stay in the party. On Monday, 26 February, Mr Thurnham voted against the Government on the Scott report.

He protested to Mr Major at not being given an interview for the Westminster and Lonsdale seat, for which Mr Major's former adviser, Tim Collins was selected. Mrs Howard's note, written by hand on personal, headed notepaper, underlined the feeling that he was shabbily treated.

A fax intended for Jonathan Aitken, the former Treasury minister, warning that a tabloid newspaper was preparing a damaging report on him, was faxed to the wrong number, and emerged in the *Independent* on Sunday.

Crash costs Dunlop £600,000

Dunlop, the tyre manufacturing giant, agreed yesterday to pay almost £600,000 in damages to four members of a family involved in a motorway accident which claimed the life of a 14-year-old girl and left eight people seriously injured.

The accident happened as the Carroll family, of Grove, Oxfordshire, was travelling along the M4 near Seaxinton in an Austin Princess. A rear tyre on a Ford Cortina, carrying five people, blew out and caused the car to mount the central reservation before smashing into the Princess. Lolita Barclay, 14, from Bristol, a passenger in the Cortina, was killed.

The dead girl's family and the injured sued Dunlop at the High Court in Oxford. A lawyer for the Carrolls claimed that the Dunlop SP4 165 radial tyre concerned had a fault and that a huge section of tread flew off because of inadequate bonding of rubber to steel cords.

After yesterday's settlement, Mrs Susan Carroll, who suffered severe head injuries and now has partial sight, is to receive £550,000, her husband Alan £22,000, daughter Catherine £15,000 and son Stephen £10,000. Judge Kenneth Wilson-Mellor will deliver his formal judgment in court on Monday.

BBC's queen of soaps poached by Channel 5

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Corinne Hollingsworth, executive producer of *EastEnders*, is to become controller of drama at Channel 5 in a move which signals its intention to fight ITV for mass audiences.

Her defection is the latest in a string of high-level poachings from the BBC by Dawn Airey, Channel 5's 34-year-old director of programmes.

Earlier this month she announced the appointment of Tim Gardam, head of weekly programmes for BBC news and current affairs, as controller of news, current affairs and documentaries. She has also poached Michael Artwell, the BBC's commissioner of factual programmes, to control features and arts. David Berry, BBC's scheduler, is joining as controller of planning at the channel which starts on New Year's Day.

Ms Hollingsworth, a workaholic, has gained a reputation for winning huge drama audiences by concentrating on human interest storylines. She also produced *Casualty* for the BBC.

At *EastEnders* she spiced up storylines by having Michelle get pregnant by her former bettor Grant Mitchell, throwing Ricky into a love triangle with

BBC hits: *EastEnders'* tangled trio Rick, Bianca and Sam

his wife Sam and girlfriend Bianca and introducing the "Sharogate" tape heard by Grant in his car. Audiences earlier this month were 21.5m, more than a million higher than *Coronation Street*.

She was brought in to perform the same magic at *Casualty*, the hospital drama, two years ago. She pushed up viewing figures to almost 18 million by switching the focus to the love lives of the characters.

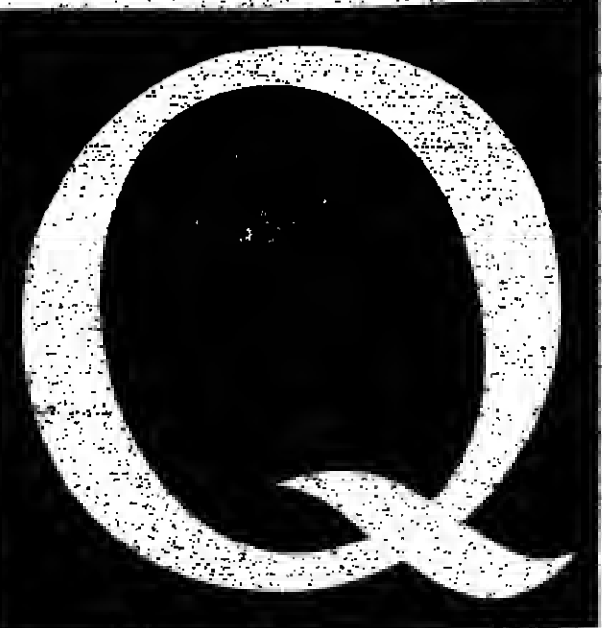
But the industry has not forgotten her one flop - *Eldorado*, the BBC's dire sun and sangria soap set on the Costa del Sol. Ms Hollingsworth was brought

in to turn it around but despite adding a million viewers the soap was axed in 1994.

Viewers can look forward to a populist drama output on Channel 5. Its bid to attract original drama in the first year.

Emphasis will be on genre drama, including a *Casualty*-style serial called *Lifeline* about young doctors and nurses, *Mycho Lane*, about trainee police officers, and *DD's*, about an inner-city legal aid practice. Repeats will include *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Minder* and *Knightmare on the Edge* will also be a diet of genre shows and current affairs.

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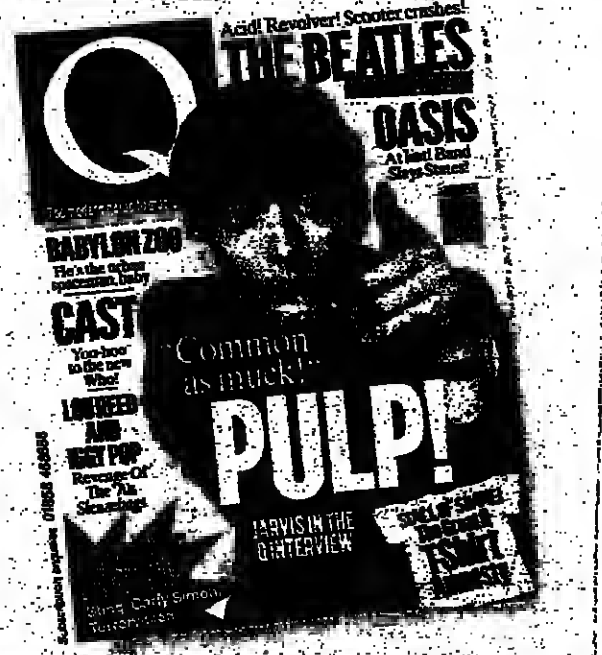


He's lanky. He's louche. He's the poet laureate of low-life - and, in the wake of *that* Michael Jackson incident, *Pulp's* Jarvis Cocker is the tabloids' favourite whipping boy. This month, he tells Q, "The more you show your arse at public functions, the more people like it."

PLUS! On top of the world with *Babylon Zoo*, down the trousers of *Leggy Pop*, behind the smile of the new, improved *Lou Reed*, into America with *Oasis*, and all over the shop with *The Beatles*.

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news

West's former solicitor suspended for a year

WILL BENNETT

Howard Ogden, the serial killer Frederick West's former solicitor, was yesterday suspended for a year for unbecoming conduct, but cleared of trying to cash in on his former client's notoriety.

Mr Ogden, 42, from Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, was also ordered to pay half the costs of the solicitors' disciplinary tribunal hearing, which are likely to be several thousand pounds. The tribunal was told that he got West to sign a form which waived his right to professional confidentiality.

The tribunal also heard that West and Mr Ogden jokingly discussed a film of the murder case and talked about which actors and actresses would play the various parts.

Yesterday's case arose out of the decision by West to sack Mr Ogden in August 1994 amid allegations that the solicitor was trying to sell the book and film rights to the case for £1m.

Mr Ogden admitted two allegations yesterday that he had behaved in a way which com-



Frederick West: Discussed film of murder case

promised or impaired his professional reputation and that the waiver agreement had caused a conflict of interest between himself and West.

But he denied that the agreement either gave him or might have acquired him an interest in publication rights in the West case and the tribunal found in his favour on this allegation.

David Swift, for the Law So-

ciet, told the tribunal that Mr Ogden had acted for West during previous criminal proceedings in 1992 and was re-engaged by him after his arrest in February 1994 for the murders at 25 Cromwell Street, Gloucester.

Mr Ogden sat in on many of the police interviews with West and also saw his client regularly. Janet Leach, an independent observer appointed to attend the interviews, was also present.

In March 1994 Mr Ogden visited West and produced a form for him to sign in which, Mr Swift said, West "agreed to waive his rights to confidentiality as a client in favour of the respondent [Mr Ogden]".

The form stated Mr Ogden "may write a book concerning my case" and meant that neither West nor his family would benefit from the sales of such a book. Mr Swift said that the agreement which was signed by both West and Mrs Leach "represented a serious example of misconduct" and breached the solicitor-client relationship.

He said that Mr Ogden initially denied the existence of such an agreement, but was

eventually forced to hand over all material relevant to the case by a court order obtained by West's new solicitor.

A statement from West was read to the tribunal which said: "It became clear that Mr Ogden's main concern was to get information from me to write a book."

Mr Ogden told the tribunal that he accepted that he should not have put Mrs Leach in the position of becoming a witness and that he should have allowed West access to another lawyer.

But Mr Ogden denied that he intended any financial gain from a book adding: "All I set out to do was to follow my client's instructions which were to be in a position to discuss this with somebody. I believe that that was all the waiver of confidentiality was about."

But Philip Hodson, chairman of the tribunal, told him: "With the exceptional circumstances of the West case it was important for the respondent to take exceptional care and ensure he dealt with all matters in a scrupulous professional manner. This he failed to do."



Suspended: Howard Ogden

Photograph: Photomax

Spin doctors come into play on a matter of title

JAMES GUSICK

The spin doctors from Britain's royal courts were yesterday in conflict. Buckingham Palace and the Princess of Wales's own media adviser continued at odds over the future title, role, residence and divorce settlement to be awarded to the princess.

After a day of quiet briefings and contradictory statements from her own office and the Palace, Diana cancelled a pre-arranged charity event. Her mood was described as "very upset and decidedly sad".

The Princess of Wales's private lobby was, according to discreet sources, describing a sad, lonely, almost neglected royal recluse all alone in the vastness of Kensington Palace. Her newly appointed media adviser, Jane Atkinson, said the Princess had reluctantly withdrawn from the British Red Cross 125th anniversary celebration. "The Princess wants a few days of quiet at home," she said.

Elspeth Thomas, chairman of the BRC council, said: "We are very sorry that HREH the Princess of Wales is unable to attend our event, but we fully understand and support the reasons for her decision."

The Prince of Wales, in contrast, was continuing with his royal duties. He visited the oil-spill coastal areas of Pembrokeshire. He should have been asked by the chasing media how he felt about the environmental disaster and plans that would stop another. But the only interest in oil was on the troubled waters of the royal marriage.

Divorce lawyers were yesterday described as "hard at work" by one royal source. The Princess's firm was seeking clarification from Buckingham Palace over her title after divorce. Despite her announcement on Wednesday that she would be called Diana, Princess of Wales, it emerged later that she would no longer be styled Her Royal Highness. But who agreed or ordered the removal of HRRH?

There is also disagreement over whether or not there was a deal Diana should keep her Kensington Palace apartment and offices at St James's Palace.

The Princess, following a meeting on Wednesday afternoon with the Prince at St James's Palace, believed such things were resolved. So her advisers are saying in public. The Palace insists that, apart from an agreement to divorce, there was no deal.

According to a Cambridge lecturer in international politics, "We are being treated to a splendid drama. I can't wait for the next act. But please don't mention me by name... the knighthood, you know."

Diana's office say they are attending to the mess. Ms Atkinson said: "We are hoping the current situation can be cleared up very quickly and that negotiations can then continue in private. But we have agreed to differ with the Palace over whether the Princess decided to drop the style Her Royal Highness."

The constitutional expert Lord St John of Fawsley said that Diana would remain a member of the Royal Family. "She must be a member of the Royal Family because she is the mother of two of the princes. It is a tie of blood and family that cannot be deleted," he said.

IVF couple 'will fight for others'

GLENDA COOPER

A couple who were told they were too old to have fertility treatment on the NHS pledged to continue the fight for other couples in their thirties as they showed off their three-week-old son for the first time yesterday.

Julie and Michael Seale thanked the anonymous businessman who paid for the test-tube baby treatment which enabled them to become a "real family" but added that they would keep pressurising the Government to adopt a national policy on fertility treatments.

Mrs Seale, 38, from Sheffield, South Yorkshire, was told two years ago that she was too old to be accepted for in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment under her local health authority's rules, which lay down an upper age limit of 35. Had the couple lived in Wakefield - just eight miles from their home, but covered by a different health authority - Mrs Seale would have been eligible for NHS treatment until she was 42.

She had been trying for a baby for seven years and had undergone six operations, only to be told that her only chance of conceiving was through IVF.

The couple unsuccessfully took Sheffield Health Authority to the High Court to chal-

lenge the policy, as they could not afford the £2,000 cost of the fertility treatment which had only a 25 per cent success rate.

After they failed, an anonymous London businessman donated the money and Mrs Seale, who was treated at the reproduction research and treatment unit and Nottingham University, became pregnant at her second attempt. Their baby, Jordan, was born on 5 February.

Mrs Seale told their benefactor, who has been sent pictures of Jordan via his solicitor: "I want to thank you for making us a family... If it wasn't for you, Jordan would not have been born."

She said yesterday: "We are going to keep up the fight for other couples even though we may be a small voice in the wilderness." Mr Seale added: "It is appalling that there is up to 15 years' difference in the availability of IVF on the NHS and people can only have it if they've got the money to pay."

Dr Simon Thornton, medical director of the clinic where she was treated, said the IVF situation in other countries was much better. "In Australia, the government funds the system so that couples have six attempts on the health service, and in Israel couples have as many IVF attempts as it takes to have two children."

Doctors unable to work equipment to save girl

Ten doctors in an operating theatre were unable to work a piece of equipment that could have helped save the life of a 14-year-old girl after a routine operation went wrong, an inquest was told yesterday.

Janine Connor, of Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester, went into Withington Hospital, Manchester, for cosmetic surgery to pin back her ears, which had embarrassed her since she was seven.

With the operation complete, Janine suffered a cardiac arrest as she was coming out of general anaesthetic, the inquest at Swinton, Greater Manchester, heard. Two old defibrillator machines - used to provide an electrical shock to stimulate the heart - were brought into the theatre, but doctors were unable to operate them.

Up to 10 vital minutes were lost in the attempt to revive Janine before a third, more modern defibrillator was found and used on her.

The solicitor for Janine's family, Neil Kinsella, asked the surgeon David Whitty: "Don't you think it is extraordinary that out of 10 doctors, nobody was able to operate this defibrillator?" Dr Whitty replied: "Yes."

Over half an hour after the

arrest began, surgeons managed to get Janine's heart working by manually massaging it after cutting open her chest. She was transferred to the intensive care unit at the Manchester Children's Hospital, but died six days later without regaining consciousness.

Doctors who gave evidence agreed that defibrillator treatment should be given "as soon as possible. The inquest continues."

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Rail link to cut London to Paris trip to 2½ hours

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport correspondent

Rapid transit between European capitals came closer to reality yesterday when the contract for the £3bn Channel tunnel rail link was finally awarded to a consortium. When the link is completed in 2003, Paris will be reached in two and a half hours by train from London, while Brussels could be reached in just under two hours.

But the consortium, which includes Richard Branson's Virgin group, is at the centre of a fierce row over the extent of government funding for the scheme.

Sir George Young, the Secretary of State for Transport, announced in Parliament that London & Continental, a consortium of eight companies, would receive £1.4bn at present prices in subsidy to build the link. In addition to the 68-mile high-speed rail link between St Pancras and the mouth of the tunnel at Folkestone, which is expected to cut about half an hour off the journey to Paris and Brussels, the consortium will also build stations at Stratford in east London and the as-yet non-existent Ebbsfleet in Kent.

From April, as part of the deal and to provide it with a source of revenue, L&C will be given the assets of European Passenger Services, the British arm of Eurostar. Sir Derek Hornby, chairman of L&C, said

that Eurostar was at present losing money and the consortium's first priority was to turn it around. "At the moment it has 3 million passengers per year, and that's not enough. It is a very good service but there has been a failure on the marketing and ticketing side."

He said that by 2000, there would be "more than double" that number using the service. At present, loadings have been around 50 per cent on the Paris route and under 30 per cent on the Brussels line.

L&C's bid includes a connection to the West Coast main line, which means that trains from Manchester, Birmingham and many other regional centres will be able to connect directly with the Channel tunnel. Sir Derek envisaged an hourly service to Paris from Birmingham and Manchester, with the intermediate stop at Stratford rather than St Pancras, which will save up to an hour.

The French section of the route is already a high-speed line with trains travelling at 180mph, while the Belgian section is due to come into use in two phases over the next two years, saving half an hour on the journey.

The decision to build an international station at Stratford surprised and delighted local MP Stephen Timms who said: "The decision makes Stratford the natural base for the growing number of European companies looking for locations in London."

L&C also announced that the company would be floated on the stock exchange after the Bill enabling the construction of the route was passed, which is likely to be in the spring of 1997.

The Government has been spurred on to build the link despite the large amount of subsidy because of its embarrassment over the comparison between the journey in France on high-speed tracks and Britain where delays are often caused by the international trains having to share the line with old Southern Region railcars. A previous attempt to build the link was shelved five years ago because the Government refused to provide any funding.

The consortium will also receive £100m in grant from the European Union, bringing total public subsidy to £1.5bn, in addition to Eurostar. The extent of subsidy was criticised by Labour's transport spokeswoman, Clare Short, who accused the Government of "handing over £3bn worth of public assets. On top of this, the Government is writing off £1.3bn worth of Eurostar debt and contributing £1.4bn to the project. Thus the taxpayer is contributing £5.7bn in value for a £3bn project that we could have had at £1bn cost in 1989".

Sir George replied that he did not believe the delay had cost more and added that the project was not just about transport but regeneration as well.



Top show: An exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci drawings from the Royal Collection opens today at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. It includes sketches for the Adoration of the Magi and the Last Supper, plus designs for war machines and fold-up boats. Photograph: Nick Turpin

Police to sue over CS spray injuries

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

Three police instructors who taught other officers how to use CS sprays are attempting to sue for alleged injuries caused by the incapacitant.

News of the actions came as 16 forces in England and Wales started trials of the CS devices. Civil liberty groups and critics believe not enough is known about the spray, which they fear could lead to deaths and a flood of litigation.

The training officers are understood to be seeking compensation for blistering caused to their skin after exposure to the spray during pre-trials. The claims for damages are the latest blow in the run up to the six-month trials of the hand-held CS spray which start today among 2500 patrol officers.

In one of the three cases a

Metropolitan Police inspector said he suffered 50 per cent burns to his eyes and had to have them covered for five days. He has claimed that the spray could cause severe injuries. His case led to the postponement of trials last year.

Two other instructors, understood to be from Surrey, are also seeking damages after they suffered blistering.

The Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers argue that the CS spray has been thoroughly tested and is safe if proper aftercare is used.

Nevertheless, earlier this month one of Britain's leading police self-defence experts was banned from training officers on how to use CS sprays because his chief constable was worried about being sued by people injured by it. Inspector Peter Boatman, a training officer from Northamptonshire police force, has been barred from teaching officers outside his region after Ted Crew, Chief Constable of Northamptonshire, said he feared his force could be sued if someone was injured by the spray.

Fred Broughton, chairman of the Police Federation, representing rank and file members, said yesterday: "We would have preferred to use pepper sprays, but CS spray is the next best option. We have been given categorical assurances by Home Office scientists that there are no long-term health risks, but we will be carefully monitoring the trials."

Trials of the CS canisters, which have a range of up to three metres, will last six months. Police forces involved will be the Met, West Midlands,

Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Avon and Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Dorset, Durham, Dyfed-Powys, Kent, Leicestershire, Northumbria, North Yorkshire, West Mercia, and West Yorkshire.

If trials are successful, police throughout Britain could be issued with them. The CS powder is mixed with a solvent inside the canister and sprayed into the face. It takes immediate effect and causes streaming eyes and nose, eyelids spasm, breathing difficulties, and in some cases blistering to the skin.

Lottery cash for school sport

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Every primary school child in England will have access to sports facilities, coaching and kit under a £12m scheme funded by the National Lottery.

The programme, announced yesterday by the Sports Council, is designed to tackle growing fitness problems among a generation of youngsters

hooked on television and computer games.

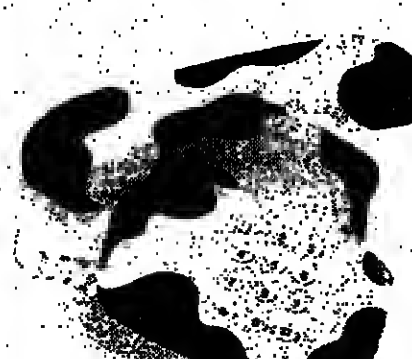
Up to 4 million children are expected to be involved in the next three years, helped by 250,000 staff at 53,000 schools and community centres.

The scheme is designed to meet the Prime Minister's pledge to bring every child in every school within reach of adequate sporting facilities by the year 2000.

Schools will be sent a bag of equipment and a set of activity cards and teachers given training in how to use them. Children between four and nine will be taught co-ordination, ball skills and teamwork. A separate and overlapping scheme for those aged seven to eleven will introduce them to mini versions of hockey, netball, cricket, rugby, tennis, table tennis and basketball.

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news

EU leaves Wensleydale dairy out in the cold

NIGEL BURNHAM

A row erupted yesterday between the makers of one of England's most famous cheeses and the Ministry of Agriculture following the omission of "Wensleydale" from a new EU list of 300 protected food and drink products.

The list, which is designed to prevent traditional products unique to particular areas from being copied elsewhere, includes champagne, Newcastle Brown Ale, Scotch beef – and eight European cheeses.

But it does not include Wensleydale, the pride and joy of its manufacturers, Wensleydale Dairy Products of Hawes (WDP), the company which rescued the local creamery after Dairy Crest – the commercial arm of the Milk Marketing Board – closed it down in 1992.

Yorkshire's most celebrated cheese has been made in Wensleydale for 1,000 years and sold commercially for the past century. To aficionados it is the one and only crumbly, bitter-sweet genuine article, distinct from at least three impostors.

Its omission from the Protected Designation of Origin



Cheesed off: Creamery workers make their unique "bitter-sweet" cheese in Wensleydale. Photograph: John Houlihan

(PDO) list has left the creamery's managers and its 70-strong workforce stunned and angry. David Hartley, managing director of WDP, which last year had a turnover of £5.1m, said:

"There's only one Wensleydale in the whole of the world... so it's particularly galling to us that we've been left off this list."

Mr Hartley laid the blame for the omission at the door of the

Ministry of Agriculture which, he said, told the creamery of the deadline on applications for the list after the deadline had passed. A ministry spokesman said the deadline was well pub-

licised and he was "at a loss" to know why the creamery didn't know of it. He added that WDP was likely to be included on the next PDO list, to be published "within a year".

Attacks up, but Condon defends street initiative

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

The number of muggings in London has increased by 1,000 in the past six months despite a high-profile police operation against street attacks, it was disclosed yesterday.

However, Sir Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, described the initiative as a great success as figures also revealed a 75 per cent increase in arrests for muggings during the same period. In addition, the number of street crimes had started to drop in the three months to the end of January.

Operation Eagle Eye caused a furore among sections of the

capital's black community when it was launched last August. It was directed largely at young black men, identified as the group who carried out most muggings. Community leaders believed that black youngsters were being criminalised.

Figures released yesterday showed that six out of ten people arrested in the operation were young black men. Seven out of ten of the victims described their assailant as a black male. Gangs of youths aged 14 to 15 are largely responsible for the crimes.

The initiative, which involves officers using video surveillance to target suspected muggers, was set up after the public identified the problem as a key concern.

Metropolitan Police figures showed yesterday that the number of muggings rose by 5.7 per cent in the first six months of the initiative. There were 18,398 muggings between August last year and this January, compared with 17,402 in the same period in the previous year.

Sir Paul yesterday denied this was a failure and argued that the police had now got the problem under control. He said that although the number of muggings had risen, the rate at which they were increasing had

been cut dramatically. Police had predicted the figures would rise by 20 per cent unless action was taken.

"Any increase is disappointing, but in the context of what was happening, I think it has been a dramatic success," he said. He also pointed out that both the detection rate and the number of arrests had increased significantly.

In the last six months there were 2,586 arrests for mugging, compared with 1,474 in the equivalent period in 1994/95.

It also emerged that in November, December and January there was a decrease of around 1,000 – to about 8,000 – in the number of muggings reported compared to the previous year.

Sir Paul revealed that muggings were typically committed by gangs of between two and eight people of varying ages. The average age was around 14 to 16, but some were young as 11 or 12. Girls were sometimes involved, but usually in non-violent roles.

Questioned about the targeting of young black men, Sir Paul said: "It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge who is being arrested and who victims are saying are carrying out these crimes."

Four easy steps to evolving a shell



Zoologist lifts lid on evolution of tortoise shells

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

Comedians might wonder why the chicken crossed the road, but scientists have a more vexing question: how did the tortoise get its shell? An Australian zoologist working on fossil records believes he has the answer.

He says the creature grew so big it needed stronger bones to support its back. Then, it started growing a shell and could not stop. Tortoises and turtles are both reptiles, putting them in the same grouping as snakes. But their armoured shell, made of a fused spine and ribs, sets them apart in a group known as "cheloniens".

They are both descended from a small, extinct reptile, which had no armoured shell, a flexible spine and was only slightly smaller than modern turtles.

Michael Lee, at the University of Sydney, has studied the family tree of these animals, and found that at some stage in their evolution, millions of years ago, they grew much bigger – up to a metre long – and needed larger vertebrae on their back to

support the stronger muscles needed to swim by flexing their spine. "Contrary to previous intuition, dermal armour probably did not function defensively," he says in the science magazine *Nature*, published today.

But as the muscles grew larger and stronger, bony additions, known as "osteoderms", were needed – until they began to cover the animals' backs and restrict the spine's ability to flex. Tortoises and turtles had increasingly to use their limbs as paddles, because they could not rely on the fish-like twisting of the spine to propel them through water or over land.

Professor Lee says this loss of agility and speed would have "locked them further into a herbivorous [plant-eating] niche."

This process soon became unstoppable in evolutionary terms. Over a few tens of millions of years, the bones of the spine and the osteoderms fused into a single piece, as did the ribs underneath, because they served to ward off predators. That left tortoises and turtles at almost the same size as their original ancestor – but with an entirely different appearance.

DAILY POEM

Prayer (I)

By George Herbert

Prayer, the Church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heaven and Earth,
Engine against th' almighty, sinner's tower,
Revered thunder, Christ-side piercing spear,
The six-days world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear,
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well-dressed,
The Milky Way, the bird of paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices, something underworld.

George Herbert (1833-1833), clergyman and poet, was an aristocrat by birth but a parish priest by choice. It was always the simple piety of faith that informed his verse rather than the pricking anxieties of spiritual conflict. He is known best today for his poem "Love". "Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back, / Ourselves of dust and sin", but was admired in his own century and acknowledged as a leading metaphysical poet long before the publication of his single volume *The Temple*. He died aged 40 on 1 March 1833.

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news

Camelot told to justify lottery profits of £65m

REBECCA FOWLER

Camelot, operator of the National Lottery, admitted yesterday that it expected to make a pre-tax annual profit of £65m, but denied being granted a "licence for daylight robbery".

John Grist, Tory MP for Hendon North, asked: "How can you possibly justify the sort of money you are making?"

The directors of Camelot defended their 5 per cent cut from the lottery, to cover their costs and profit, on the basis that the company and its investors had taken a substantial risk in setting it up.

Tim Holley, chief executive, said they faced daily fines of £1m if they had postponed the launch. He defended their profits on the basis that under the lottery licence, the greater the turnover, the smaller the percentage profit for the operator. He said that they would never make more than 1p in the pound from it.

Since the lottery was set up 15 months ago, it has been an unprecedented success with up to 40 million people playing each week, more than vote in the general election. However, Mr Holley said he was anxious that it should not "overheat".

Camelot will bring out new games, including the mid-week draw, gradually to ensure that the public is not saturated by too many games. "My concern is that we don't throw everything in the pot in the first year or so, and cannot sustain it over a long period," he said.

The company denied that it had set sales targets for the 20,000 outlets that sell lottery tickets in Britain as part of an aggressive marketing campaign. It also said it was active in preventing the sale of tickets to under-16s.

Only one retailer, a Liverpool shopkeeper who sold a ticket to a 12-year-old boy, had been forced to give up his ticket terminal. But Camelot said that a further 201 shops were being subjected to under-cover surveillance following allegations of illegal sales.

Any suggestion that prizes should be capped by the committee, chaired by Gerald Kaufman, to prevent huge jackpots - which have included more than £40m in a double-roll-over week - was resisted by Camelot on the basis that the public responded best to high prizes.

Tories accused over jail costs

HEATHER MILLS

Home Affairs Correspondent

Ministers were accused yesterday of misleading Parliament and the public by falsely claiming that private jails are cheaper than those run by the state.

Anne Widdowson, minister at the Home Office, told a Prison Service conference last month that private prisons were between 15 and 20 per cent cheaper than their state counterparts. She was explaining the loss of 5,000 jobs in the state sector at a time when inmate numbers were at record levels.



Treasure trove: 'Nighthawkers' found a collection of ancient gold coins buried beneath the land of this Home Counties farmer, who did not want to be identified. 'They were part of the heritage of my farm, and I'd rather they were still buried underground,' he said. Photograph: John Voos

In January, William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, told the Commons: "Private sector prisons have demonstrated greater efficiency than those retained and run directly in the traditional way."

But internal finance documents - obtained by Labour - showed that for the six months ending in September last year, some state prisons cost less per inmate than those in the private sector.

'Wasteful' NHS offices to be investigated

CHRIS BLACKHURST

Westminster Correspondent

A brand-new National Health Service building is to be investigated by the National Audit Office, the public finance watchdog, amid allegations that millions of pounds of taxpayers' money have been wasted.

Robert Sheldon, Labour MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, chairman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, has written to the NAO asking it to look into the NHS executive's decision to spend £4.1m on moving its Northern and Yorkshire regional headquarters from Harrogate and Newcastle to Durham.

Law may soon be watching the detectorists

REBECCA FOWLER

Britain's treasure hunters are at war. Proposed new legislation for what happens to unearthed hoards, including ancient coins and non-precious metals, has fuelled animosity between archaeologists, landowners and metal detectorists.

They are divided over the Treasure Bill, designed to reform medieval law covering the discovery of lost gold and silver - which will receive its second reading next week - and a code calling for detectorists to report any antiquities which might have historical interest.

David Graham, honorary secretary of Surrey Archaeological Society, and an adviser on the Bill, has been among those pushing for change, alongside historians and institutions including the British Museum.

Their concern was heightened a decade ago, when a Roman temple at Wanborough, near Guildford, in Surrey, was plundered by unscrupulous metal detectorists, known as "nighthawkers".

An estimated £1.5m worth of Iron Age and Roman coins disappeared. There are at present 30,000 metal detectorists in Britain, who are estimated to find around 400,000 items a year, although only a minority of these are either precious or of significant historical interest.

Ryder is 52nd Tory to quit at election

The Former Conservative Chief Whip Richard Ryder, MP for the safe Tory seat of Mid-Norfolk, is to stand down at the next election.

Mr Ryder, 47, who became an MP in 1983, was John Major's Chief Whip from 1990 until he stood down in last summer's reshuffle. He said in a statement yesterday: "I have decided, after long consideration, to inform the Mid-Norfolk Conservative Association that, with much sadness, I shall not be a candidate at the next general election."

He said he would carry on with his constituency duties and offered his "total support" to the Prime Minister.

Mr Ryder gave no hint as to his reason for going, but even when he was Chief Whip he was said to be considering giving up politics for an academic career. He is also reported to suffer from a head back.

Mr Major appointed the self-effacing Mr Ryder Chief Whip after reaching 10 Downing Street in November 1990. The job involves getting the Government's legislative programme through Parliament.

As Mr Major's Commons majority fell, and backbench Tory MPs became more rebellious, Mr Ryder's job became harder. He was blamed for the failure of the Government to win the crucial Commons vote over VAT on fuel.

Conservative Central Office said Mr Ryder is their 52nd MP to announce that he or she will stand down at the election.

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	£6,000	14.9%	£204.98	£7,379.28
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EU-Asia summit: Major treads a delicate path in Hong Kong as East-West relations undergo realignment within world markets

Tension lifts over HK handover

DONALD MACINTYRE
Bangkok

John Major yesterday went out of his way to defuse tension with China over Hong Kong after meeting the Chinese Premier Li Peng on the eve of the Prime Minister's highly sensitive visit to the colony this weekend.

Mr Major went into his 45-minute meeting with the Chinese Premier only hours after Peking's top official in the colony had warned the British Government against "stirring up trouble". Zhou Nan, head of the New China News Agency and Peking's *de facto* ambassador there, said: "We sincerely hope the British can carry out their obligations and fully co-operate... and stir up no further trouble for Hong Kong's smooth transition."

But Mr Major made it clear after the meeting with Li Peng that he detected a marked improvement in relations between Britain and China over the past few months.

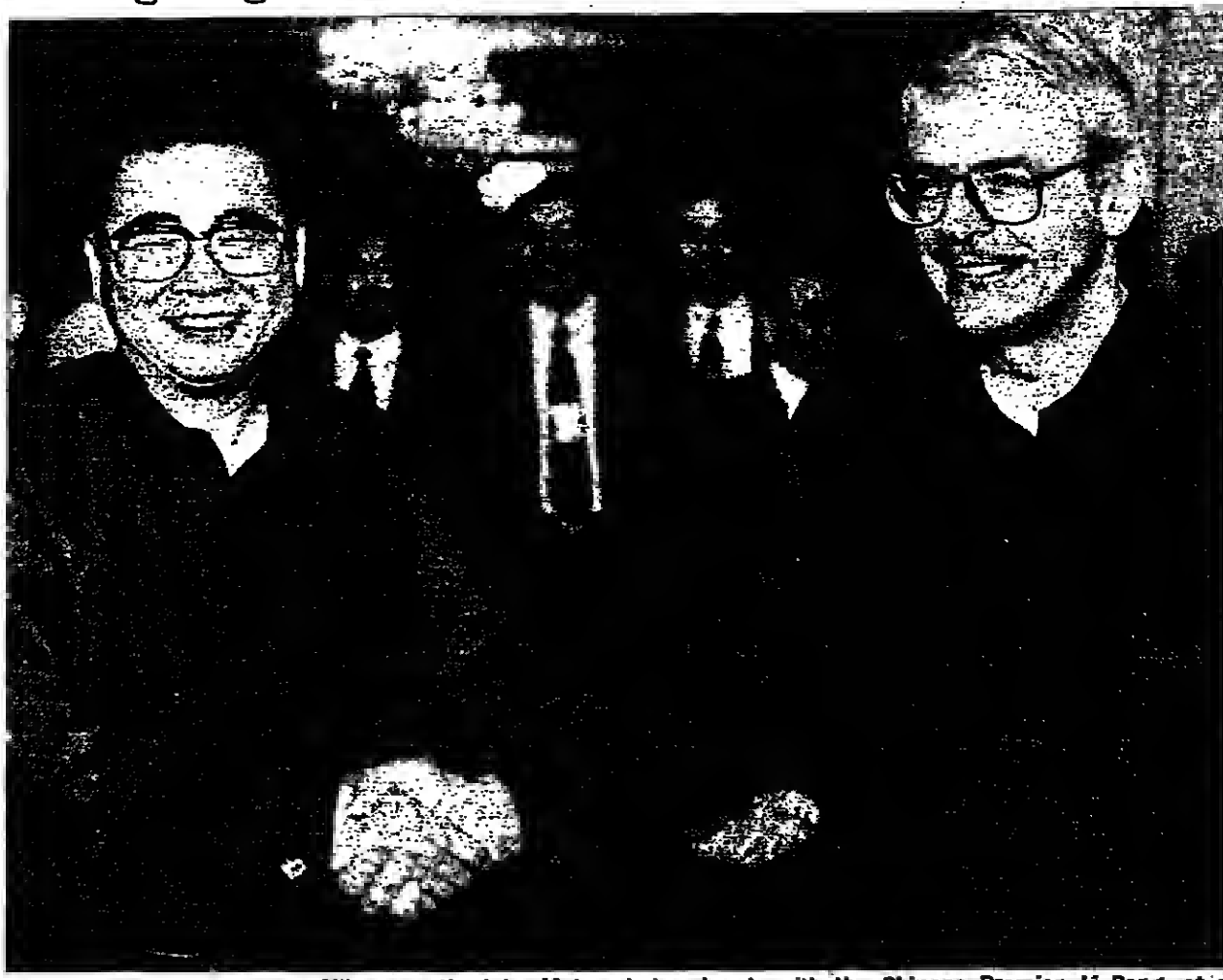
Mr Major did not disguise that there is still no convergence between the two governments over the key issues for Hong Kong: the future of the now democratically elected legislative committee for Hong Kong (Legco). Mr Major said he had told the Premier "that Hong Kong's success has been founded not only on economic success but on the rule of law and that continuity and stability are a very important part of a successful transfer in 1997."

Yesterday's statement at a New Year celebration in Hong Kong reflects the continuing irritation of Chinese officials at the Governor Chris Patten's decision in three years ago to introduce democratic reforms without Peking's agreement - and the Government's stated view that an elected Legco should continue. But after his talks in Bangkok, where he is attending the Asia/EU economic summit which opens later today, the Prime Minister said

that Li Peng had shown strong signs that he recognised the need to build confidence in Hong Kong in advance of the handover. Mr Major and other British officials were encouraged by confirmation from Li Peng that China would not send its own officials to govern Hong Kong after 1997.

Mr Major raised what he himself called the "sensitive" choice of chief executive to run the colony after the handover. He said that while Li Peng had not given any indication of when the choice would be made, he had shared his aspiration that the post would be held by someone "acceptable to the people of the colony".

John Major will have to tread the delicate path, on what will probably be the last visit of a British prime minister to the colony before the handover, of calming intense anxiety among many of the colony's inhabitants while not worsening relations - including trade relations - with Peking.



Silky smooth: John Major shakes hands with the Chinese Premier, Li Peng, at a cocktail party in Bangkok, prior to the Asia-Europe Summit which starts today. All the leaders wore Thai silk shirts for the occasion. Photograph: Dylan Martinez/Reuters

IN BRIEF

Portugal offers Indonesia ties

Portugal offered Indonesia a partial reopening of diplomatic ties in exchange for the release of the East Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister Antonio Guterres said yesterday.

"Portugal would be ready to open an interest section in a friendly embassy in Jakarta and to accept an interest section in a friendly embassy in Lisbon," he told reporters after an unexpected private meeting with Indonesia's President Suharto.

Portugal and Indonesia have been at loggerheads over East Timor since Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975. There have been persistent reports of human rights abuses on the territory. *Reuters*

Kohl's big sleep

Thailand's top hotel is arranging a giant-sized bed for the bulky German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, as usual at world summits. A last-minute call from protocol officers to the swanky Oriental Hotel ensured Kohl had plenty of room to stretch out after his summit exertions.

"We have had to extend his bed in length and width after getting confirmation he is exceptionally tall and big," a member of the hotel staff was quoted as saying by a security source. *Reuters*

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£25,000-£49,999	4.40%	3.38%	£5,000-£9,999	4.60%	3.45%
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	£3,000-£4,999	6.25%	4.69%		£10,000 +	5.30%	3.98%
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	£10,000-£24,999	5.30%	3.90%		£5,000-£9,999	3.40%	2.55%
	£25,000 +	5.55%	4.16%		£10,000-£24,999	3.90%	2.93%
					£25,000 +	4.20%	3.15%
CapitalBonus 90	£500-£4,999	3.90%	2.93%	TaxFree Option 90 Day	£500-£4,999	3.90%	2.93%
	£5,000-£9,999	4.20%	3.15%		£5,000-£9,999	4.20%	3.15%
	£10,000-£24,999	4.50%	3.38%		£10,000-£24,999	4.50%	3.38%
	£25,000 +	4.80%	3.60%		£25,000 +	4.80%	3.60%
CapitalBonus 90 Monthly/Half Yearly	£500-£4,999	3.40%	2.55%	TaxFree Option 180 Day	£500-£4,999	4.10%	3.08%
	£5,000-£9,999	3.80%	2.85%		£5,000-£9,999	4.40%	3.30%
	£10,000-£24,999	4.10%	3.08%		£10,000-£24,999	4.70%	3.58%
	£25,000 +	4.50%	3.40%		£25,000 +	5.05%	3.85%
Share Account Bonus 7	£1+	0.60%	0.45%	Double Bonus	£500 +	3.10%	2.33%
Instant							
Super Bonus	£200+	3.10%	2.33%	Bonus 90	£200-£9,999	3.90%	2.93%
					£10,000-£19,999	4.50%	3.38%
					£20,000 +	5.00%	3.60%
				Subscription Share	£1-£200 per month for £400 joined	6.20%	4.65%

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Bangkok summit set to warm East-West trade relations

It is unlikely that any of the diplomats accompanying John Major to the Asian-European Summit (Asem), which opens in Bangkok today, will care to gloss over the fact that back in 1855 Britain was the first Western power to conclude a treaty with what was then the Kingdom of Siam. The United States and other powers were denied access to the King's court.

Asia's rapid economic growth is leaving Europe behind, writes **Stephen Vines**

Thailand, like other countries in the region, was drawn firmly into the European sphere of influence, mainly by Britain, which at one time ruled all, or part of, half the ten Asian nations attending the summit. Now South East Asia, China, Japan and South Korea, who have sent their heads of government to Bangkok, are increasingly looking to the New World for economic and political relations, making members of the European Union feel rather left out in the cold. Britain's influence has gone.

The Americas have had a formal link with the Asian states through the Asia-Pacific Economic co-operation forum (Apec), established in 1993, while Europe has struggled to regain a presence. Not just politically but economically.

Europe's role is declining. In 1970 25 per cent of Asian imports came from Europe; two decades later that figure shrank to 15 per cent. Less than 3 per cent of European direct investment finds its way to Asia, while Japan, a fellow Asian state, has become the dominant economic player in the region, trailed by the US.

Some European powers, notably the Germans, have become increasingly aware of the shortcomings of the EU's relations with Asian countries, particularly the fast-developing economic powers who are setting a breath-taking pace of growth which leaves Europe far behind. As a whole the Asian nations' economies are growing by around 8 per cent per year, compared with growth of no more than 2 per cent in Europe.

Ideally, the EU would like to create an arrangement, which mirrors the Apec forum, the Asian powers are equally keen for some kind of balancing arrangement which makes them less dependent on the world's last remaining superpower, and

focuses the mind on the pursuit of business ties rather than what they view as interference in internal affairs, which comes in the form of pressure over human rights.

Sources in Bangkok who have seen the draft keynote speech to be delivered by the conference chairman, the Thai Prime Minister, Banharn Silpa-archa, an old-style wheeler and dealing politician, say that the speech focuses on trading and business ties. It will also suggest that Europe and the Asian states work together to form a counterbalance to attempts by the US to set the agenda for the first ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation in December.

A pre-conference meeting of non-governmental organisations in Bangkok has urged the leaders of the 25 states attending the summit not to ignore the human dimension of trade, suggesting that human and labour rights cannot be considered as side issues.

However, Mr Banharn has made it clear that this is not on

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Lack of a male heir threatens oldest monarchy

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Tokyo

Japan's Imperial Family is facing a crisis. Two thousand seven hundred years after its foundation by the mythical Emperor Jimmu, the world's oldest hereditary monarchy is running out of male heirs.

The government has become so worried that it has dispatched envoys to several European countries, including Britain, to study a revolutionary possibility: that the law may be changed to allow a woman to ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne.

Compared with their British counterparts, Japan's royals are models of decorum, thrift and restraint. Cloistered behind the moat and thick walls of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, they emerge publicly only a few times a year to attend national athletic meetings, plant trees, and wave at their subjects from behind bullet-proof glass.

Japan's compliant media have no truck with tabloid-style muck-raking, but the less reverent of the country's many weekly magazines have become increasingly preoccupied with the absence of imperial offspring.

Rumours about a future empress appeared to have been decisively quashed earlier this year by the newly appointed Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Agency, Sadame Kamakura. "We are not thinking about the question of an empress," he said. "Our current system clearly specifies male succession to the throne, and it is working adequately."

But privately the agency, an obsessively cautious government organisation which controls every aspect of the Imperial Family, has been dis-

creetly studying the possibility for several years. The problem has become increasingly worrisome with the continued failure of Emperor Akihito's children to produce sons.

Since their wedding in June 1993, Crown Prince Naruhito and Princess Masako have had no children. Next in line is the Emperor's younger son, 30-year old Prince Akishino, and both his children are girls. After him the succession would fall to a line of obscure and ageing uncles and cousins.

Since Prince Akishino, no male child has been born to any member of the Imperial Family.

Court officials have gathered written materials from Buckingham Palace and, in nine days' time, a senior official of the Imperial Household Agency will fly to Europe on a hastily arranged visit to the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark. In Copenhagen, they will be briefed by court officials on the constitutional referendum in 1953 which allowed Queen Margrethe II to succeed after 600 years of Danish kings.

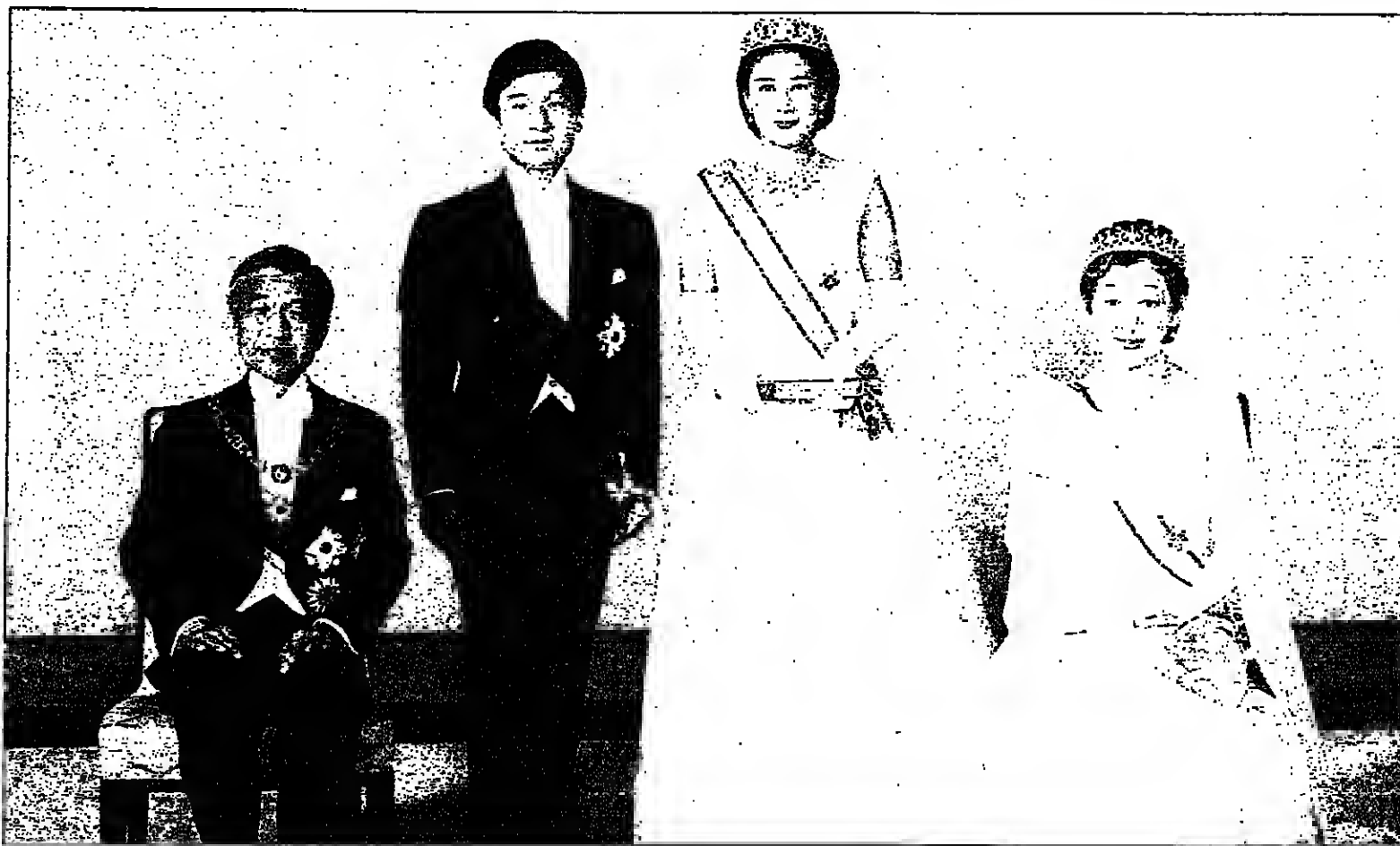
Any change would be complicated and controversial, requiring a parliamentary amendment to the Imperial Household Law and Constitution, which strictly regulate the duties, conduct and spending of the Emperor's family.

To a large extent, their low profile is a matter of cautious necessity. After the Second World War, Emperor Akihito's father, the late Hirohito, narrowly escaped being tried as a war criminal and the role of the Imperial institution arouses strong emotions in both nationalists and left-wingers. "Whether we recognise a female heir in the future de-

pends very much on whether the Japanese people are ready to accept her or not," said an official of the Household Agency.

Women played a prominent part in Japan's early history. The founding deity, from whom the present Emperor claims descent, was the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-no-Omikami.

The last Empress, Go-Sakuramachi, abdicated in 1770, and altogether seven out of Japan's 124 sovereigns have been women, although, like princesses throughout history, they have occasionally been the focus of scandals. In the eighth century, the Empress Shoken precipitated an alarming power struggle after an affair with a Rasputin-like monk.



Duty calls: Crown Prince Naruhito and Princess Masako, so far childless, with the Emperor and Empress

Photograph: AP

Indonesian hostages met by Red Cross

JAN ROBERTS

Twelve hostages, including four British citizens, held for 51 days in the mountainous jungles of Irian Jaya in Indonesia had their first meeting with outsiders yesterday.

They met with a team of three from the International Red Cross, and a doctor gave all four hostages a medical check. Only one required medicine, but was not seriously ill.

According to a spokesman, the International Committee of the Red Cross will be speaking to parents of all the hostages today. The Red Cross team was given letters for the parents and some photographs of the hostages. The four British hostages are Annette van der Kolk, Ann McIvor, Daniel Stark and William Oates.

"In general they are in good condition, although some of them have lost weight because of the gruelling time in captivity," said Jorg Stocklin, an ICRC spokesman in Geneva. None was in critical condition, including pregnant Dutchwoman Martha Klein, 32, he said. She had been reported to have been suffering from malaria and malnutrition.

"We cannot divulge the details of the health condition of the hostages because we will inform their families individually," Mr Stocklin said. He described the meeting with the hostages as an emotional one, "since it was the first time they met anybody from outside".

He said they were taken blankets, food and medicine provided by the Indonesian government and the embassies of Britain and the Netherlands.

The Red Cross went to Irian Jaya, following requests by the rebels and approval by the Indonesian armed forces, to mediate in the hostages' release.

Insurgents of the Free Papua Movement have been fighting for the independence of Irian Jaya, a former Dutch colony ceded to Indonesia in 1963.

It is understood that the OPM, the freedom movement for West Papua, is insisting it will only consider the release of the hostages to an international agency because it disputes Indonesian jurisdiction.

Irian Jaya is home to 250 tribes making up some one million inhabitants. They live in jungle long-houses, in tree-top buildings and in homes built on stilts along the coast.

The Red Cross team had

been in the mountain town of Wamena for two weeks while they carefully negotiated with the army for free access to the hostages. They were afraid military operations might have been launched at the same time in the area.

When the Catholic bishop, Monsignor H.F. Munimungholi went to meet the leader of the kidnappers, Kelly Kwallik, the army followed a day later with an undercover team. This time, the army has promised not to take advantage of the visit.

The hostages are reported to be weak due to constant movement from one village to another.

Latest reports say that they are living in a mountain cave - not far from the massive KIZ Freeport gold mine where Rio Tinto Zinc is now investing \$1.7bn in further expansion.

The operation of this mine is a key issue with the kidnappers. In 1977, Kwallik led an attack on the mine, blowing up a pipeline taking the ore to the coast. In a counter-offensive by the Indonesian army, several thousands tribespeople were reported killed.

The mine is the biggest British investment in South-East Asia. It is the world's biggest gold mine and the third-biggest copper mine. As part of its contract with the government, it provides living and transport facilities for the Indonesian Army.

According to Tim Wirth, the US Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs: "The Indonesian government have not done much to establish a government there and Freeport therefore has become in many ways both company and government."

The hostages were seized on 8 January at a meeting in Mapuduma, a village in the mountains, to discuss the creation of a major national park. Some tribespeople at the meeting saw the national park as a way of securing income but others saw it as an alienation of their tribal lands.

Daniel Kogowa, a leader of the OPM, strongly objected. That afternoon, the 26 hostages were taken. Since then, 14 hostages have been released. The British hostages were on a scientific expedition to the area paid for by BP and were all from Cambridge University.

The British and Dutch military attaches are in Wamena and will be briefed by the Red Cross today on the meeting with the rebels.

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TV chiefs agree to curb sex and violence

DAVID USBORNE
New York

After years of resistance, the American television industry pledged yesterday to develop a ratings system for the violent and sexual content of programmes that will work in conjunction with computer chips fitted to television sets.

The announcement came as some 30 of the industry's top

executives, including Rupert Murdoch and Ted Turner of CNN, arrived in Washington on a chartered bus for meetings with members of the US Congress and a "television summit" with President Bill Clinton and the First Lady, Hillary Clinton.

"Arguably you are the most powerful cultural force in the world, but we know too that freedom and opportunity can truly thrive in a free society that

is also a responsible society," Mr Clinton said.

In a joint statement, the industry's leaders said that details of the rating system would be worked out over the coming months and it would be introduced by the beginning of 1997. Programmes will be rated much in the way that the feature films are for the cinema.

The industry has been forced to act after a sweeping telecommunications bill was passed by the US Congress last month. The bill served notice to television executives that unless they moved swiftly to adopt a voluntary system of ratings, it would be forced on them.

The bill also included provisions obliging manufacturers to install so-called "V-chips" - violence chips - in all new television sets sold in the US. A television with the "V-chip"

will allow parents to block programmes rated for sexual or violent content. Information on how each individual programme is rated will be included in the broadcaster's signal.

"Our objective is clear and firm," the industry statement said. "This enterprise is totally voluntary. There will be no government involvement." Only a few months ago the television community had been vigorous-

ly opposing any kind of ratings. Agreeing on categories of ratings and their application is certain to be difficult. Broadcasters will be wary, for example, of imposing the same criteria for violent content on dramas, such as the hospital series *ER*, as for children's programmes like *Power Rangers*.

Nor is there any consensus on whether news magazines and soap operas should be affected. News bulletins, even though many include graphic footage, would probably escape.

Civil liberty groups fear the introduction of ratings could add up to censorship and the erosion of free-expression rights under the US constitution's First Amendment. But Al Gore, the Vice-President, said yesterday that the plan raised "no First Amendment questions whatsoever".

Final straw for German spy chief

KEVIN LIFFEY
Reuter

Bonn — The head of Germany's foreign intelligence service resigned yesterday after his spies were embroiled in scandals over selling secrets for cash and a sting operation to catch plutonium smugglers.

The final straw for Konrad Porzner was the government's refusal to remove or retire two senior intelligence officials whose subordinates were believed to be involved in an embezzlement scandal.

The head of the Federal Intelligence Service (BND) had won a reputation as a stickler for the rules who failed to keep close tabs on his staff or to keep the BND out of the firing line, particularly in the plutonium smuggling affair.

Mr Porzner, 61, issued a terse statement saying the head of Helmut Kohl's chancellery, Friedrich Bohl, had refused his request to move or retire the two officials. "I have therefore asked that I should be placed in early retirement," he said.

As a career civil servant, this was in effect the only way he could resign. A government spokesman confirmed the request had been granted.

An informed source said BND staff were being investigated for embezzling more than 1m marks (£450,000) intended to buy the services of Russian officers leaving former East Germany. The men were also believed to have sold information on the Russian military to a British secret agent - prompting Porzner to travel to London to express his annoyance.

Mr Porzner, a long-time member of parliament for the opposition Social Democrats, came under fire recently for refusing to let the BND investigate the mysterious disappearance of millions of marks stashed abroad by East Germany's ruling Communist Party, and now owed to the German state. He had already been undermined by accusations that the BND virtually lured smugglers into bringing lethal plutonium into the country on a passenger flight from Moscow in August 1994 in the hope of selling it.

At peace with God and Mammon in the new South

RUPERT CORNWELL
Greenville, South Carolina

In this thriving corner of the Bible Belt, which tomorrow has its say in the US presidential primaries, there are two of Ronald Reagan's shining cities on a hill. One is very much the work of God, the other fruit of a decision taken a few years ago in southern Germany. And in the civil war raging within the Republican party, where both sides claim the Reagan legacy for themselves, they are fortresses of opposing armies.

Venture among its immaculate assembly halls, dormitory blocks and along its shaded avenues, with not a scrap of litter in sight and you instantly realise that Bob Jones University, the pride of Greenville, is a most unusual place of learning. In fact it is the largest fundamentalist Christian college in America, founded in 1927 by a man who believed secular education was ruining the country's youth, and now home to 5,000 students who lead a life symbolised by the inscription over the campus shop: "Edifying and equipping the saints to go forth."

In its hushed interior there is nothing more secular on sale than chocolate bars and Kodak film, alongside shelves brimming with uplifting spiritual works. A few steps away, of-

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

fering yet greater edification, is the university's remarkable museum, where soft music plays, the pile carpet is one inch thick, and the walls are studded with religious paintings by, among others, Cranach, Titian, Botticelli and Veronese. Not quite what you expect in the provinces of South Carolina, but proof that God has rich patrons.

More to the point, this is the world of Pat Buchanan. The boys have short hair and perfect manners. The girls, in the required dress of flat shoes and skirts below the knee, are frozen images from the 1950s.

Mr Buchanan's vision of America is essentially a vision of the 1950s; a nostalgic world where America was God's country, where crime scarcely existed, where women stayed at home and looked after the children, when the US accounted for 60 per cent of the world's economic output, and when foreigners knew their place - a world where everything was perfect and nothing quite real.

Outside the 10ft walls surrounding the university, the mirage persists. In an eatery across from the campus



Preaching to the converted: Pat Buchanan at the Evangel Cathedral where he told his audience 'I just want to make America God's country again'

entrance, a middle-aged man in a jeans jacket and a baseball cap pores over a worn volume of *The Teaching of Christ*, as he consumes a chicken salad.

Later that evening, Mr Buchanan speaks at the Evangel fundamentalist Cathedral just outside Spartanburg, a few miles away. "I want to make America God's country again," proclaims the commentator-turned-candidate, as the audience of several hundred stand and cheer. It is his best received line of the night, better than the tirades against foreigners, the exhortations of the "raging heat" of Washington, or the "vow to overturn *Roe v Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court ruling guaranteeing a woman's right to an abortion."

The cathedral is spanking new, more like an plush concert hall than a house of God, surrounded by huge parking lots for the faithful. It bespeaks the wealth of a region which epitomises the vibrant "new South."

But for the true believers, entrepreneurial flair, imaginative state governors and the rest have little to do with it. "We're prosperous because God wills it," says a young woman as she leaves, clutching a Bible and leaning towards Buchanan,

though still not quite sure how she will vote tomorrow.

But in nearby Greer, shines the other city, which Pat Buchanan, the protectionist does not visit - a creation not of the Almighty but of German capitalism. BMW's factory, the Munich car manufacturer's first in the Western hemisphere and as squeaky clean as the Bob Jones campus, is the shrine where his rival "mainstream" candidates make obeisance. On Wednesday Bob Dole, yesterday Lamar Alexander. "This is proof of how a free trade system creates jobs," insisted Mr Dole as he toured the glisten-

ing plant. The day before Mr Dole turned up, the company announced a \$200m expansion at Greer, creating at least 500 new jobs by 1998, and bringing its total investment to \$300m.

In fact, the two worlds of upstate South Carolina not only coexist, but overlap. Students at the great and good of the local party, leading Mr Buchanan in the state by 35 to 24 per cent. Mr Alexander trails with 13 per cent, closely followed by Steve Forbes. But whatever the fluctuations of the race, one thing is certain. The man who can carry Bob Jones and BMW wins - not just South Carolina, but the nomination, and maybe the White House too.

late 20th century America.

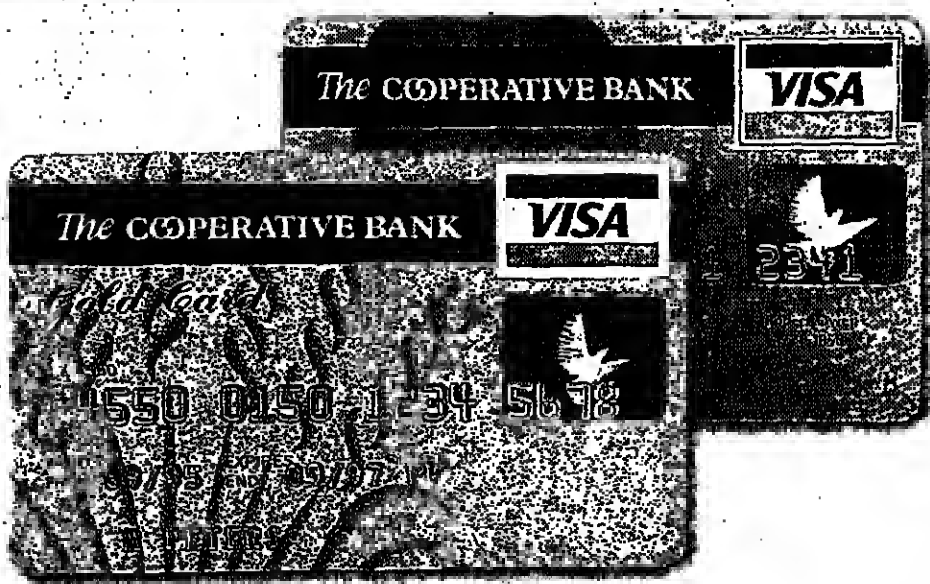
And in that paradox surely lies the key for the Republicans in this strange election year. For what it is worth, a new poll yesterday showed Mr Dole, heavily promoted as usual by the great and good of the local party, leading Mr Buchanan in the state by 35 to 24 per cent. Mr Alexander trails with 13 per cent, closely followed by Steve Forbes. But whatever the fluctuations of the race, one thing is certain. The man who can carry Bob Jones and BMW wins - not just South Carolina, but the nomination, and maybe the White House too.

PEOPLE



Portrait of a man, likely related to the 'PEOPLE' section.

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Siege of Sarajevo declared at an end

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

The Muslim-led Bosnian government declared the Serb siege of Sarajevo to be officially at an end yesterday, after taking control of the suburb of Iljasi and a vital road connecting the capital to the rest of Bosnia. "The siege of Sarajevo is now officially over," said the Bosnian Interior Minister, Avdo Habić, after he and other government officials arrived in Iljasi in a convoy of bullet-proof cars, police vehicles and fire engines.

The Bosnian government regained control of Iljasi four years to the day after Bosnian Muslims and Croats voted in a referendum to declare independence from former Yugoslavia.

Most Bosnian Serbs, who made up about one-third of Bosnia's pre-war population, boycotted the referendum, and full-scale conflict broke out in early April 1992.

Iljasi is one of five Serb-controlled suburbs of Sarajevo that the Dayton peace agreement stipulated should return to Muslim-Croat authority. As in the case of Vogošća, the first suburb to pass under Muslim-Croat control last week, most Serb residents of Iljasi had fled their homes in the days preceding the handover.

Out of 17,000 people who lived in Iljasi at the end of the war, only about 2,000 were still there at the beginning of this week, according to United Nations officials.

The evacuation of Serbs continued up to the last minute, with seven buses taking women and elderly people out of Iljasi on Wednesday afternoon for the northern Bosnian Serb city of Banja Luka.

Tens of thousands of Serbs have left the five suburbs ahead of the handover of power, which is due to be completed by 20 March. Many have abandoned their homes under pressure from Bosnian Serb authorities, who have whipped up fears of Muslim persecution and made normal life all but impossible by



Spoils of division: A Hungarian soldier passes the remains of the Sava bridge, 90 miles east of Zagreb, one of 300 destroyed in Bosnia and Croatia in the war

Photograph: AP

stripping the suburbs of their infrastructure.

UN police said that some Serb residents had set ablaze an apartment block and several houses and cars in the 24 hours before the transfer of power in Iljasi. Most houses and blocks of flats were empty.

The departure of the Serbs has struck a severe blow at international efforts to reconstitute Sarajevo as the multi-national capital of a united

Bosnia. The aim of the Bosnian Serb authorities appears to be the permanent physical separation of Serbs from Muslims and Croats, a goal they did not fully achieve during the war.

The minority of Serbs who remain loyal to the Bosnian government and believe in a multi-national Bosnia have been checked by the tactics of the Bosnian Serb leaders based in Pale, outside Sarajevo. In a letter to the US Secretary of

State, Warren Christopher, the pro-government Serb Civic Council said: "Under pressure from the Pale authorities, Serbs are being pushed into an exodus of the worst kind."

"They are being forced to abandon and burn their own houses and homes and to go into the unknown... Unfortunately, the international community, as in the case of Srebrenica, is quietly watching this tragedy and the final stages

of the ethnic division of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Some international observers have blamed Muslim authorities for stoking the fears of Serb civilians. Michael Steiner, an assistant to Carl Bildt, the top European Union representative in Bosnia, said Muslim policemen who entered Vogošća last week had torn down the Serb flag and trampled on it in the snow.

"This is exactly what hap-

pened - before the eyes of the Serb population, before Serb cameras. You can imagine what a disastrous effect this has on those who are still thinking about staying in the town," he said.

The US ambassador to Bosnia, John Menzies, visited Iljasi to watch the transfer of power and expressed the hope that Serbs who had left their homes would gradually trickle back. "Damage in the town

looks relatively limited. The city of Sarajevo is knitting itself back together again," he said.

Control of Iljasi was crucial to the Bosnian Serbs' wartime strategy of maintaining a stranglehold on Sarajevo. It prevented the Muslim-led forces from capturing the main road north out of Sarajevo and linking the capital with Visoko, a town that was under government control throughout the war.

IN BRIEF

Rwanda denies revenge massacres

Paris — Rwanda yesterday denied a report in the French newspaper *Libération* that its ruling Tutsi minority, victims of genocide in 1994, had turned the tables and killed over 100,000 of their Hutu opponents in a wave of revenge massacres.

"The national unity government has never had a policy of systematic extermination of any part of the Rwandan people, as was the case for the previous regime," said the Information Minister, Jean-Pierre Bizimana, in a statement distributed in Paris. "No investigation has ever confirmed the gratuitous accusations of massacres, whether in the form of exterminations or systematic vengeance."

Cuba protest

Havana — Cubans said that the United States had the means to, and should, stop a planned new foray of boats and planes by exiles near Cuba this week-end, adding that Cuba would use all means necessary to counter fresh violations of its territory.

Prison riots spread

Athens — Rioting in Greek prisons spread from the western city of Patras to a maximum security jail on the island of Corfu, where prisoners set buildings on fire and took nine guards hostage.

Qatar plea to Paris

Dubai — Qatar has rejected an Iranian offer to send 30,000 soldiers to help protect its security following an alleged plot and has turned to France instead, the London-based *al-Hayat* newspaper said, quoting a senior Qatari official. Qatar said last week that two weeks ago it had foiled a plot against the government and arrested around 100 suspects.

Curfew on workers

Beirut — Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri brought in the army to impose a nationwide curfew and foil workers' protests in a showdown with labour that intensified concerns about his democratic credentials.

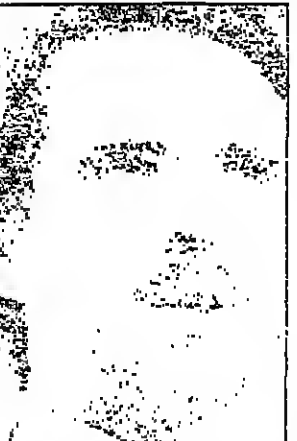
Killer's bullet

Merano — The same gun apparently fired the bullets that killed four people in what police believe may be the work of a serial killer, the *Asa* news agency said. Police said the bullet that killed the latest victim, Paolo Vecchiolini, on Tuesday appeared to have been fired from the gun involved in the other deaths.

Hands off

Canberra — The headteacher of an Australian school has banned his pupils from holding hands, labelling it a sexual act. Mick Sheehan, head of Sorell District High School in Hobart in the island state of Tasmania, said the act of holding hands was inappropriate on school grounds, and threatened to suspend any student who defied the ban.

Grey man with a streak of steel set for power in Spain



Aznar: Spanish John Major plays up his ordinariness

ELIZABETH NASH
Madrid

Spaniards are getting used to the idea that the conservative Popular Party leader, Jose Maria Aznar, the man who addresses his shirt buttons when he speaks, is set to become their next prime minister.

As the campaign for Sunday's elections closes today with the PP comfortably ahead, Mr Aznar, who once said, "I am alive because they have denigrated me", is being likened to John Major as an example of how greenness can rule OK.

With victory over the Socialist Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, in sight, commentators

are muting their previous contempt, to uncover hidden merits in the uncharismatic figure who has made the PP a convincing contender for government. Most conclude that what you see is what you get: "a single-faceted, ordinary man" says the traditionally pro-Socialist *El Pais* newspaper.

The comparison with Mr Major gains force from context. Many, perhaps most, Spaniards — like Britons at the end of the Thatcher era — are weary of a long-serving glamorous leader who has filled the stage for more than 15 years and seduced them with promises. Many want not a crusader to chivy them on forced marches but a quiet

manager who will leave them alone.

Intentionally or not, Mr Aznar's advisers emphasise his lack of qualities. One points out "his extraordinary normality"; another says, "he is a very ordinary chap, sometimes excessively so". But the former tax inspector from a comfortable middle-class family has shown his steel. He has quickly imposed his will on the party he took over in 1989. Potential challengers or dissidents have been unplugged, and there is talk of fear in the party's upper reaches.

He also showed mettle when he walked calmly from his twisted heap of a car after a bomb attack by ETA Basque separatists last April. Mr Aznar's popular standing soared, and he even joked afterwards: "Now, it seems, I have charisma."

Mr Aznar, 43 last weekend, has run a slick campaign, avoiding territory where he risked being ambushed, that of a face-to-face confrontation with Mr Gonzalez, and revealing only the barest outline of what a PP government would do. He makes a virtue of his Delphic utterances: "I promise nothing," he says. "I have no commitment to any person, sector or social group. I have a completely free hand because I don't owe anybody anything." He has also exploited his deadpan personality. "I am calm, I am serene," he

assures his supporters, who roar their approval.

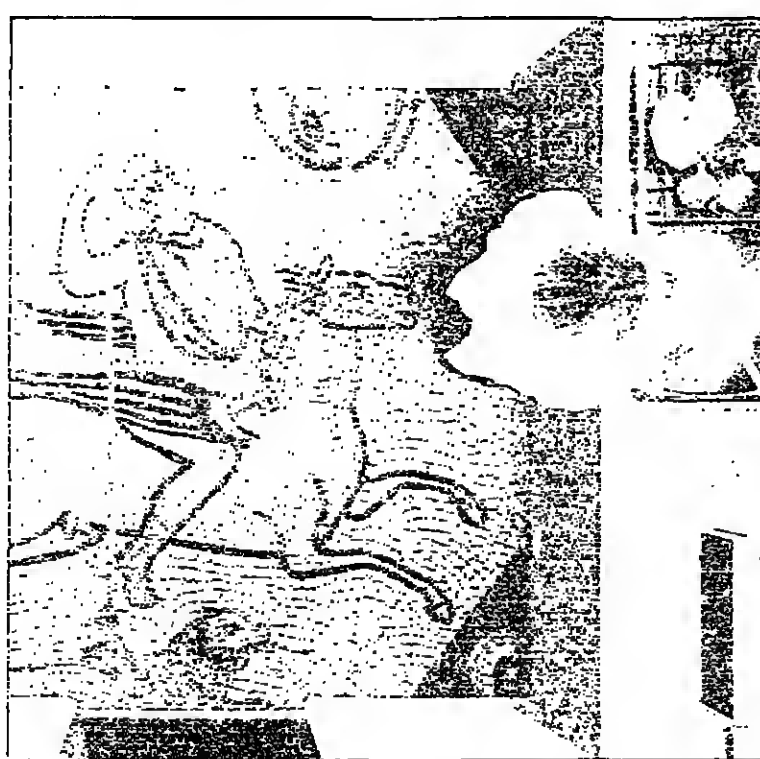
He has hoisted up in the past weeks — perched on the edge of the platform dangling his legs and soaking up the adulation — but not enough to dispel the impression that he would rather be in his office, or at home with his wife, three children and two cocker spaniels.

Mr Aznar goes everywhere with his wife, Ana Botella, a bright, outgoing woman who has a popular following of her own. Her presence at every meeting breaks the mould of Spanish electioneering and prompts suggestions that they aspire to be an American-style presidential couple. Ms Botella,

whose biography was published last year before that of her husband, pooh-poohs the idea. The first lady of Spain, she observes, is Queen Sofia.

Ms Botella embodies the traditional, pre-feminist woman for whom family is everything and whose life is fulfilled in the shadow of a powerful husband. She buys his clothes, does out his pocket money. The couple reflect the kind of Spaniard Mr Aznar seeks to attract: modern but respectful of tradition, educated but undaring.

They are — to use one of Mr Aznar's favourite words — "correct": Mr and Mrs Normal. "Spain," he says, "needs a spot of normality."



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Does the BP merger with Mobil herald a long overdue retail revolution for the dull old petrol station? Nigel Cope reports

We'll fight them on the forecourts

Consider how much has changed in the past 20 years. Mrs Thatcher has come and gone. Whole sections of British industry have been privatised. The First Division of the Football League has become the Premiership. Punk has come and gone and come again. The Monarchy has started to fall apart beneath the weight of its own failed relationships. And yet some things have remained remarkably the same, seemingly untouched by the march of progress – such as the traditional, drafty, oily, petrol station forecourt.

Unmanned stations have failed because three-quarters of customers like to pay cash

– is largely unaltered from the mid-Seventies. While retailing elsewhere has undergone a revolution – the arrival of US fast food chains, the rise of out-of-town shopping centres – the petrol station has been untouched.

But change may be in the wind. Yesterday's announcement that BP and Mobil are to merge their European petrol retailing businesses is probably the first stage in a long-awaited shake-up in an over-supplied and in some ways still old-fashioned industry.

The Mobil name will disappear from Britain but it is unlikely to be the last to go. Petrol retailers are under such pressure, both from the supermarket operators grabbing market share and from each other, that more mergers, takeovers and even bankruptcies are inevitable. In a few years both the number of petrol stations and the way they operate could be very different.

Having moved from the greasy, overall-wearing petrol pump attendant in the 1950s and 1960s to the self-service operation with shops in the 1980s, the market is set for the next stage in its evolution.

The number of petrol stations is already falling fast. There were 17,000 at the beginning of 1995. Forecasts suggest there could be just 10,000 by the end of 1997.

The shake-out began in earnest last year when Frost Group, which trades under the Save name, took over Burmah's petrol stations. Elf's stations are up for sale and several other operators could soon decide to quit.

Paul Sykes, head of the Independent Petrol Retailers Association, says: "This is the first of many such deals we are going to see. Other oil companies will pull out of the UK – certainly by the summer. They are losing money selling petrol." Those under pressure include Repsol, Q8, Murco, Gulf and Fina.

The main problem is over-supply. There are just too many brand names and too many stations chasing too few cars. The supermarkets have played a major part in the shake-out. From a standing start five years ago the big four supermarket chains now have almost 25 per cent of the UK market. Their higher sales volumes have enabled them to cut prices forcing BP, Shell and Esso to follow suit, which has narrowed their profit margins. When Esso launched its PriceWatch campaign in January, pledging to match the lowest prices within a three-mile radius, the game plan was clear – it wanted to grab share back from Sainsbury and Tesco.

But competition need not necessarily be on price alone. To date, petrol stations have done little to differentiate themselves from each other by the quality of service they provide. Petrol stations seem terribly alike: similar prices, almost identical stations and the same tired promotions offering free wine glasses in return for a handful of tokens.

The entrance of the supermarkets into the competition is forcing others to change tack.

There are two main routes the petrol stations can take to respond to the competition. They can either become more streamlined, to cut costs and prices. Or they might seek to differentiate themselves by offering a distinctive service.

One obvious cost-cutting route is to introduce unmanned stations. Both Shell and Q8 are testing unmanned stations where customers pay by credit card. Unmanned petrol stations have proved hugely popular in Scandinavia. They are the norm in Italy for sales after dusk. Previous UK trials have foundered on concerns for customer safety. Ron Frost, chief executive of the Frost Group, is sceptical. He says unmanned outlets have been a "monumental failure" in the past because they rely on credit card payments while three quarters of all customers still pay for their petrol by cash.

The other route is to bring back the pump attendant. It is easy to imagine what MacDonalds would do with petrol

stations. There would be staff in neatly pressed uniforms with baseball hats offering a sharp line in patter and a winning smile. Or there could be Virgin-style petrol stations, with loud music, bright colours and lots of young people serving you. One of the reasons for the

shortcomings of petrol retailing is that it is largely in the hands of oil companies who are better at finding, drilling, producing and refining the stuff than they are at selling it in an attractive and friendly way.

There are lessons to be learned from other countries.

In the US some operate a drive-thru system where a pad on the pump can take orders for a Big Mac, large fries and Coke. The driver then costs towards the service point where they pay for their petrol and pick up their burger. Some UK companies such as Texaco

have started opening drive-thru restaurants.

However, the UK market is sceptical about these innovations. Shell says the Japanese like more service because the car is seen as more of a status symbol. Drivers in this country might not like attendants hanging

the pump nozzle against the car, it says.

So it seems that perhaps very little will change, despite the ferocity of the competition. Petrol stations will continue to be drafty, oily, charmless places. Indeed the price war will drive out some of the weakest players.

Small local petrol stations – the last bastions of the personal touch – will be the main casualties. In Scotland things have already got so bad that a development agency has awarded a £50,000 grant to help a Highlands petrol station to stay open.

A brief history of the petrol pump



How they do it abroad

Rome Italians love cars almost as much as their mothers. A good filling station will give you not just petrol but the automotive equivalent of a manicure. But after dark, when the only open garages are unmanned, you usually have to battle with unreliable automatic vending machines.

France Over the past 25 years more than half of France's service stations have gone out of business, victims often of aggressive pricing policies by hypermarkets, which use low prices to attract customers. Almost half the country's petrol is now sold at such outlets, usually self-service. A big oil company recently introduced service with a smile – including cleaning windshields – to help create jobs – but it seems unlikely to catch on.

Hong Kong Self-service has yet to reach petrol station forecourts in Hong Kong, but so has price competition. Every petrol station in the colony charges the same prices for all petrol products. So petrol stations attempt to lure customers with gifts such as tissues, bottled mineral water and other soft drinks. Very few petrol stations offer additional services such as windscreen cleaning, but as there are always a number of attendants on hand they will check oil, water and battery fluid.

US The Fifties were the best time, in the words of the Esso commercial, to "put a tiger in your tank". Every gas station checked your oil and water, washed your windshield and filled your tank while you sat back and rested. Today you can still get so-called full service but your petrol can cost as much as 50 per cent more than for self-service.

Japan Driving into a Tokyo service station is like being guided in to land a jumbo jet, with a small team of willing attendants on hand to help you. While you sit in a room with a television, they will fill your tank, clean your windows and check oil and water levels as well as tyre pressure before assembling to wave you off the forecourt.

DIARY

Stage set for a Bottomley farce

Bad news for the MP for Surrey South West. The constituency's treasured Redgrave Theatre has just received a letter from the funders at South East Arts – no funds are available to reopen the theatre.

This has led to much gnashing of teeth in Farnham, and had-mouthing of the South East Arts bods and their ultimate masters at the Department of National Heritage – ruled, it has to be said, by the MP for Surrey South West, one Virginia Bottomley.

This is hugely embarrassing for Mrs Bottomley, who has supported the campaign to reopen the Redgrave, which closed, after 20 years, in January last year. She had also praised Waverley Council's Herculean fundraising efforts.

"I rang Mrs Bottomley a week ago, when I got the first whiff that the SEA might be withdrawing their assurances

of support after a year of watching us sweat to raise funds at a time when our budget was cut by over £1m," says Anna Thomson, the council's leader. "Mrs Bottomley was appalled and said: 'Of course the theatre must be saved.'"

"Obviously, now I will be going back to her to see what suggestions she has."

Flagship hits the rocks

Triumph has clearly gone to *Panorama's* head. The BBC's flagship documentary series, covered in glory last week at the TV awards for the Princess of Wales interview, was by Tuesday busy wiping the egg off its face.

On Monday night's million viewers sat down to watch *Empress on the Rocks*. Instead, they were treated to a distinctly non-award-winning hiatus – and then shown an old repeat. What

could possibly have gone wrong? "Oh, just a minor technical fault, that's all," is the breezy official BBC response. "A little problem with the soundtrack."

Er, that's not quite the whole story, according to my source. There was indeed a soundtrack problem, but staff had given themselves just an hour to edit it. Then the equipment didn't work. Then they couldn't find anyone to mend it. With panic reaching fever pitch, frantic minions dashed to put on a standby programme, only to discover that they couldn't find the tape. Cue muddle, music and red faces all round.

When they finally found something to stick on, it was a documentary called *Salvaging Babies*.

Salvaging oil tankers had been what viewers were really after. Doubtless there are a few BBC technicians now busy salvaging their jobs.

Break for young Major

It seems that the self-effacement of our Prime Minister knows no bounds. At a reception given yesterday by his former employer, Standard Chartered Bank in Bangkok, he was reintroduced to his former friend and colleague Lionel Mee. Mee was the man who carried the stretcher bearing the wounded Major on to the VC10 that was to take him out of Nigeria after his car accident in 1987.

Major therefore gave a little speech about their time in West Africa. "Nigeria," he said, somewhat understating the case, "was in a volatile situation." The bank had therefore asked for volunteers to work there. Six were selected. "I have since come to the conclusion," the PM said, "that the reason for my selection was that I was, in fact, expendable."

Prince of hyperbole

The Prince of Wales has been focusing on the problems of had communication recently. No, this is nothing to do with his divorce from the nation's leading spin doctor, but his participation in a stunt by the Plain English Campaign.

The campaigners are planning to bury a time capsule, packed with examples of the "ordinary" English of the past 25 years. The Prince offered his very own pastiche of hyperbole. It goes: "It was when I was still a juvenile future constitutional figurehead substitute that I first became sensitised by mother-tongue abuse awareness."

Make what you will of that.

Invisible revolutionaries

There was a nasty moment when I arrived at London's Reform Club on Wednesday night for the launch of *The Blair Revolution* by Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle. I thought I had come to the wrong place. The room was packed with Lib Dems. There was scarcely a Labour bod in sight (and certainly not Tony Blair), but pieces of paper hung everywhere quoting John Major: "I have not read the book, but it sounds an extremely good buy..."

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The hypocrites of the officer class

It is alarming how long it takes for this Government to learn a lesson. Its reputation may never fully recover from its cynical handling of the Scott report. Not a single minister has resigned or even admitted responsibility for the long list of failings detailed in the report, from systematically misleading Parliament to serious professional misjudgements. But, as we reveal today, it gets worse.

Add to the charges of dereliction of duty, stupidity and arrogance, rank hypocrisy. Ministers have escaped blame for changing British policy on arms sales to Iraq without telling Parliament. But of course that does not stop them looking for a few civil servants to carry the can. In yet another demonstration of the culture of arrogance among those who rule us, the officers have decided that the troops in the ranks should be punished. The top brass, who directed the arms-to-Iraq policy, will not be in the firing line. Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary, is in the clear. The man who told the Scott inquiry that ministers had a right to withhold information from Parliament, who masterminded the Government's distorted and deceitful presentation of the Scott report, will not be facing disciplinary action. His career will not be affected by revelations of how he, the chief mandarin, presided over a civil service that failed the public interest and hid what was going on in a confusion of half-truths. Sir Robin can look forward to his peerage for services rendered.

The officials whose careers may be brightened are more junior civil servants, those who perhaps drafted the misleading parliamentary answers, those who failed to tell ministers about changes in

the guidelines on arms sales, those who appeared to turn a blind eye to the type of equipment being supplied to Iraq. Such behaviour should be reviewed. The Scott report paints a picture of an administrative machine that is a law unto itself, unchecked by Parliament and often beyond the grasp of ministers. The civil servants who make this machine work should be held to account. But, though hardly innocents, most of the junior officials who may have their behaviour inquired into were just doing their jobs. They are part of a network of unaccountable power and by no means the most important part of it. To blame and punish them in isolation would be grossly unfair.

Rather than punishment, what is needed by the civil service, not to mention the people it is meant to serve, is a Freedom of Information Act, a statutory code of conduct enshrining civil servants' duty to follow the whistle on ministers whom they believe to be misleading Parliament and an independent ombudsman in whom they can confide. None of this is on the Government's agenda. Instead, the minions have been targeted to take some of the blame that ministers were not prepared to shoulder. It all amounts to extraordinary hypocrisy. But worse than that, it shows how damaging it has been for ministers to refuse to take responsibility for their actions. As a result of the appalling example they have set, it will now be more difficult legitimately to hold to account any part of the government machine. "Blame-free government" that is the modern Tory doctrine, unless you are unfortunate enough to be a mere footsoldier of the state.

Spain's debt to Felipe Gonzalez

A era is drawing to a close in Spain. After more than 13 years of Socialist rule, voters seem likely to throw out Felipe Gonzalez, the Prime Minister, in Sunday's elections and replace him with José María Aznar and his conservative Popular Party. It is a tribute to the solidity of Spain's post-Franco democratic institutions that this transfer of power, should it occur, will seem as normal an event as it would be in any other western European country. Democracy has taken root so firmly in Spain that the Franco era, which ended only 21 years ago, already seems a distant episode of history.

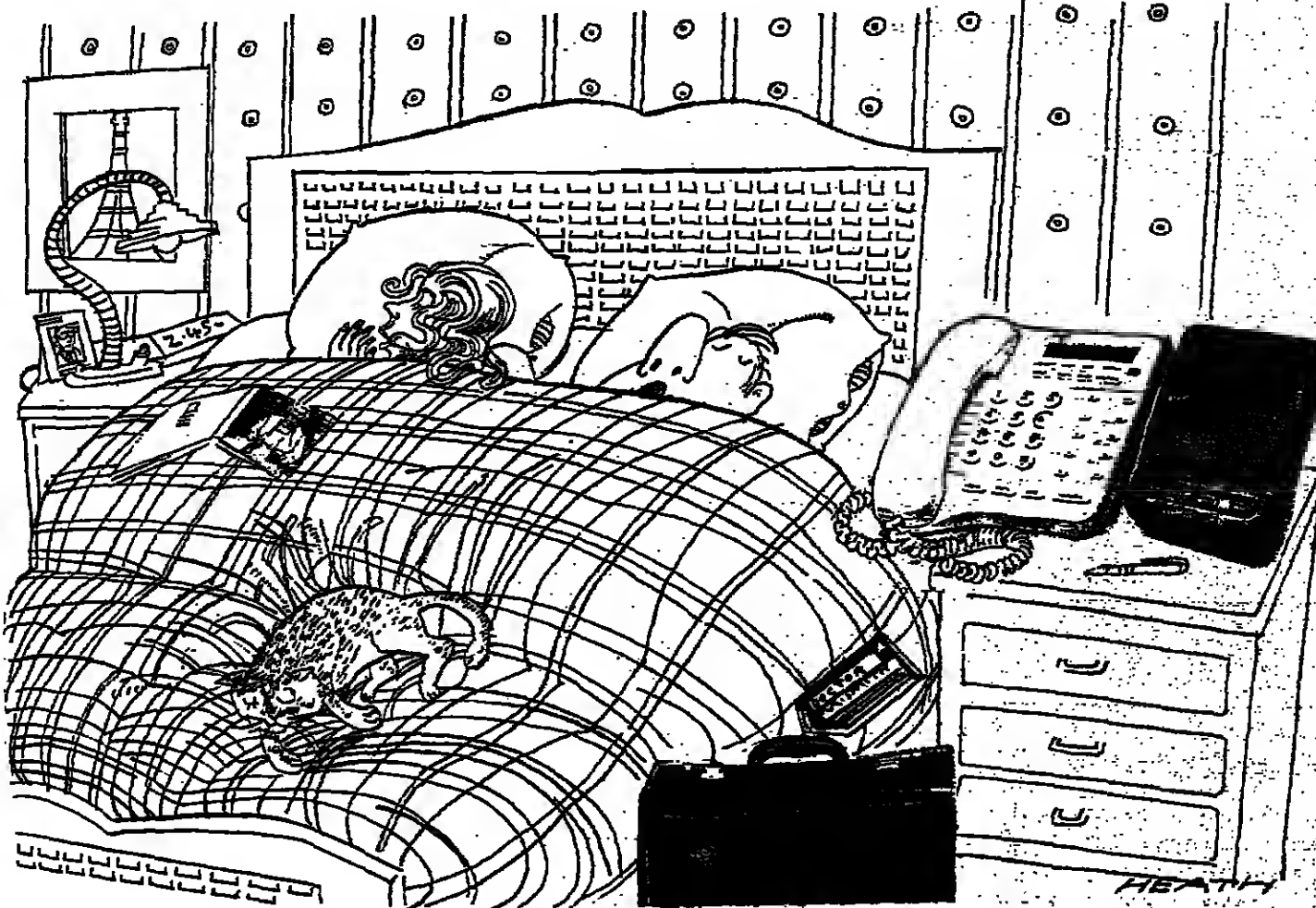
Mr Gonzalez deserves much of the credit for this. The firebrand political activist of the Sixties and early Seventies, elected leader of the then illegal Socialist Party at the age of 32, matured during his premiership into a thoughtful, pragmatic statesman. He took Spain into the European Union, maintained its membership of Nato, presided over an impressive modernisation of the economy and introduced overdue social reforms such as the legalisation of divorce. Above all, he made a vital contribution to his country's long-term political stability by demonstrating that the left could govern Spain without everything going to rack and ruin, inviting a backlash from the right. This was a great achievement in a country whose earlier history had been punctuated by violent disputes between radical forces of the left and authoritarian forces of the right.

Yet the later years of the Gonzalez era have not been so happy. A string of financial scandals involving some of Spain's

most senior bankers and businessmen has tarnished the government's image. Worse still has been the discovery that Spain's security forces waged a "dirty war" in the Eighties against separatist Basque guerrillas. It's unclear to what extent the government, and Mr Gonzalez personally, were directly involved, but the affair has cast a dark shadow over Spanish politics for more than a year.

On the economic front, too, the Socialists have lost their touch. Almost 23 per cent of the Spanish workforce is unemployed. Spain has the highest unemployment rate in the European Union. Among people aged 16 to 25, the rate is a shocking 42 per cent. It is disturbing that even when the Spanish economy expands – and it enjoyed 3 per cent growth last year – it makes barely a dent in the ranks of the jobless. Given the scale of Spain's unemployment problem it's hardly surprising that more and more politicians are privately questioning the advisability of Spain's effort to join a single European currency in 1999. Other elements of the Gonzalez legacy are also under scrutiny, particularly the regulation of the economy.

Since losing their absolute majority in the election of June 1993, the Socialists have seemed tired, bereft of ideas and directionless. A spell in opposition might be the best thing for them. Yet if Gonzalez is defeated on Sunday that should not blind us to the broader historical verdict that he has made perhaps the greatest contribution of any single politician in securing Spain as a modern Western democracy.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medical negligence: suing for compensation, or just saying sorry?

From Mr Gerald Malone

Sir: Polly Tynbee is right to highlight the risk of clinical negligence claims swallowing increasing amounts of NHS cash better spent on patient care ("Legal leeches are bleeding the NHS", 28 February). But she missed a number of recent developments.

A scheme for trusts has been set up to help manage clinical negligence liabilities. It will smooth out the impact of big claims – and build an expertise in handling complex casework. We need NHS gamekeepers to keep the smart legal poachers Ms Tynbee fears firmly at bay. Pilot studies of mediation techniques as an alternative to court action are also under way.

And a new complaints procedure, based on the Wilson committee report, comes into effect on 1 April – no longer the three-month wait for the cursory reply from a faceless official. Now, chief executives will have to handle complaints personally, within tight deadlines.

Saying sorry quickly is the right way to convince patients that their views are being taken seriously and that the NHS is prepared to learn lessons when things do go wrong.

Yours etc,
GERALD MALONE
Minister for Health
Department of Health
London, WC2

From Mr Daniel Jaynes

Sir: I agree entirely with Polly Tynbee. We must try to stop the gray train that views financial compensation as being the counter balance to feelings of being wronged – which is exemplified at its lowest level with the Citizens' Charter mentality that sets different levels of compensation for particular service failures.

There does remain a need to provide compensation for losses of income caused by accidents and illness. Such a system should not depend on the finding of fault and so remove the need for lawyers and litigation.

Encouraging personal insurance is one solution; perhaps the public expenditure spent on lawyers' fees and tortious levels of damages could be better spent on establishing a comprehensive, no-fault compensation scheme similar to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

Yours,
DAN JAYNES
Newcastle upon Tyne

From Mr Phillip Sycamore

Sir: There is a serious debate to be had about the growth in claims of negligence against all professions, but it is nonsense to claim that the Law Society takes the view that there should be more, not less, litigation. We have a long record of supporting alternative methods of resolving disputes.

In particular, there is a clear need for less litigious ways of solving disputes about medical accidents. The Society has put that view forward to Lord Woolf's review of civil justice

and has held discussions with the BMA. What is required is a system that satisfies the patient's wish for an apology and explanation (and compensation in appropriate cases) while not crucifying the doctor.

Ms Tynbee asserts that only 12 per cent of medical negligence claims succeed, but the chairman of the Legal Aid Board recently reported that 66 per cent of medical negligence claims that come to court are successful. Claims with a poor chance of success are weeded out by solicitors at an early stage without reaching the courts.

Ms Tynbee complains that solicitors have put up posters that draw attention to the right to claim for compensation. She misunderstands the purpose of these. Research shows that as many as 70 per cent of accident victims may not realise their right to claim compensation and few appreciate that most who cause accidents have insurance to cover claims. This public information

service has been encouraged by NHS trusts, who earn money from the placing of advertisements. Would NHS trusts allow these advertisements if they merely encouraged claims for medical negligence against themselves?

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP SYCAMORE
The Law Society
London, WC2

From Dr Barbara Devereaux

Sir: Polly Tynbee draws further attention to the vast amounts of public money spent by the Legal Aid Board on financing largely unsuccessful medical/pharmaceutical litigation.

A central point is the irrecoverable cost of defending these actions, against which the expenditure by the Legal Aid Board pales into insignificance. Surely these monies would be better spent on patient care?

Yours truly,
BARBARA DEVEREAUX
Swanscombe, Kent

Contracts crucial to competitive gas

From Mr Peter Sanguinetti

Sir: Lord Gifford (Letters, 27 February) is swift to attack British Gas over "take or pay" contracts. Ninety-eight per cent of contracts were signed before the Government decided to accelerate the development of domestic competition in December 1993. Indeed, 55 per cent of these contracts were actually signed before British Gas was privatised in 1986.

Furthermore, it was not until we had seen our market share in the commercial and industrial market eroded by 65 per cent – against an MMC target of 45 per cent – that we were allowed to compete on a fair and equal basis.

These long-term contracts are

a legacy of the monopoly era when British Gas, as the licensed monopoly supplier, was legally obliged to purchase gas to meet the most demanding weather conditions. The potential liabilities arising from these long-term purchase contracts are the result of restructuring the industry in order to create a fully competitive market. British Gas has not called for an MMC inquiry into this.

If the introduction of competition into the domestic gas industry is to be a success, the issue of the long-term monopoly contracts must be addressed by the industry as a whole. It would be inequitable for this burden to fall solely on British Gas's shareholders.

Yours faithfully,
PETER SANGUINETTI
Director of Corporate Affairs
British Gas
London, SW1

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Hong Kong cares for its citizens

From Mr Ian Strachan

Sir: In reply to Stephen Vines's article (28 February) on the "Victims of cold" weather in Hong Kong: the sick and the elderly are more vulnerable to sudden changes in temperature. However, the number of deaths we experienced in Hong Kong over the Chinese New Year holidays was in line with the average for this time of year. The Director of Health has confirmed that none of the post-mortems conducted has shown hypothermia to be a cause of death.

Hong Kong has 1,100 people who sleep on the streets. All have been offered alternative accommodation by my department. During last week's cold spell, one street sleeper died. He was a drug abuser who had chosen to move out of his family home.

Our social security system in Hong Kong is not rudimentary. Those supported by it are not in "unbearable poverty". Over the past three years the average payments to a single social security customer have increased by 29 per cent in real terms. The current payment, at £220 per month, is broadly equivalent to the UK old-age pension rate. Total expenditure on social security in Hong Kong has doubled over the past three years.

While Hong Kong is not a welfare state – nor will it become one – the Hong Kong government cares for the welfare of our citizens.

Yours sincerely,
IAN STRACHAN
Director of Social Welfare
Hong Kong Government
Hong Kong

Capital plans

From Mr Robert Evans, MEP

Sir: Exciting times lie ahead for London. Hollywood Hillingdon to the west, Glorious Greenwich to the east. Merrydom for the Millennium.

But can our creaking capital cope? I have already raised my concerns about London's ill-equipped infrastructure with the relevant authorities ahead of this summer's Euro 96 football festival. The proposed huge new devel-

opments will bring much-needed inward investment but will local residents be consulted, will the environment get a look in and will the welcome employment opportunities be simply Mickey Mouse jobs? Let's learn some lessons from other European capitals and begin with a proper strategic authority to take London into the 21st century.

Yours,
ROBERT EVANS
MEP for London NW (Lab)
Wembley, Middlesex

Tax break

From The Rev Paul Nicholson

Sir: The Home Secretary has announced that his Enforcement of Financial Penalties Working Group is considering alternatives to imprisoning people for the non-payment of fines and TV licences (report, 14 February). It is not, however, considering alternatives to imprisoning people for non-payment of local taxes. They are civil debts, not criminal punishments.

Civil debtors will receive harsher treatment than petty criminals if imprisonment is abolished for fines and TV licences but not for taxes. It seems right, therefore, for the working group to expand its brief to include the enforcement of local taxes in order to avoid such an unjust anomaly. Yours faithfully,
PAUL NICHOLSON
Treasurer, Campaign Against Poll Tax Imprisonment
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

China service

From Mr Derrick Streton

Sir: The Government will draw some comfort from the fact that Chinese takeaways (and Chinese speakers) can be found in all our coastal towns.

Yours sincerely,
DERICK STRETON
Westcliffe-on-Sea, Essex

News asked

From Mrs G D Williams

Sir: The BBC's priorities were asked last night: the impending divorce between the Prince and Princess of Wales was headlined on the 7pm news on Radio 4, taking precedence over the accord between Prime Minister Major and Bruton on Northern Ireland. The latter was good news; the former was no news at all. Yours faithfully,
G D WILLIAMS
London, W9

After the snip, the side-effects

From Mr Alan K Carter

Sir: William Harrison is a cautious chess player, but perhaps not cautious enough when deciding on vasectomy (6 February 1996). I admit he did consider the matter for three years but I hardly think 10 days post-operative is the time for self-congratulation.

In our detailed study of 68 men who had submitted to vasectomy, at a median time of nearly 10 years from surgery, we found that vasectomy (in the patients' perception), adversely affected a minority of patients such that 12 per cent of men had impairment of libido, orgasmic latency and erectile dysfunction, while only 61 per cent said that matters were completely undisturbed (British Journal of Family Planning 1995).

For the moment I cannot promote this operation to my patients with unmitigated enthusiasm. I hope Mr Harrison's gambit pays off for him. Yours faithfully,
ALAN K CARTER
Bridge Road Medical Centre
Liverpool

Scottish lessons

From Mr Andrew Thornbury

Sir: I notice with interest your article "Call for exam to replace A-levels" (29 February). Apparently, the House of Commons select committee on education suggests that "students might take five subjects for one year" and this is intended to widen students' studies and be a "passport to university". This seems to me a fair description of the Scottish Higher grade examinations.

In 1985, I studied six Highers, and on the basis of my results went on to study at a Scottish university. Might I suggest Sir Malcolm? The committee take a trip north of the border? Yours sincerely,
ANDREW THORNBURY
Aberdeen

From Mrs Nicola Mitchell

Sir: Judith Judd's article suggests the Scots have a post-16 education system remarkably similar to the one proposed to be made by Sir Ron Dearing. Are those of us who have received a Scottish education really any more well-rounded than our English friends? Yours sincerely,
NICOLA MITCHELL
London, W13

Ask not for whom the siren blares

As regular readers will know, I am a great collector of that modern kind of folk verse known as motorway ballads, and I was told this one the other day by a man I gave a lift to at Taunton Deane. He later got out at Membury Service Station on the M4, together with my mobile phone and in-car fax machine. However, he did leave this long poem behind, which deals with that perennial motorway mystery: what happens if you fill up with petrol and forget to pay for it?

Mr and Mrs Meredith
And their little boy and girl
Were driving down to the coast one day.

Out for a bit of a whirl.
When Father said, "Oh me, oh my.
We're very low on fuel!"
And so they stopped to get some more.

Which is the normal rule.
While Father filled the petrol tank
Mama bought bags of sweets
And crisps and chocolate-coated bars.

And other tasty eats.
For she got bored on long car trips
And so she sat and ate
Which help to stave off boredom
But made her overweight...
And when the sweets were purchased
And pennies had been spent



MILES KINGSTON

Papa switched on the engine
And said: "OK – let's go!"
(One of those jocular phrases
Which fathers like to use
Thinking they sound quite comical,
Though no one shares their views...)
And mother took a sweetie
And the kids got belted up
And Dad revved up the engine
And said out loud: "Hey yep!"
And he left the service area
To rejoin the motorway
Totally oblivious
That he'd forgotten to pay!
Yes, stricken by amnesia
He'd offered no credit card,
Not even reached for his cheque
book
So before he'd gone a yard
The girl at the petrol counter
(The one marked "PUMPS 1-9")
Had picked up her secret telephone
And got the police on the line.

"It's Sue at Northbound Petrol
Reporting an abscondee.
A guy in a red Fiesta,
Owing £30.43."
"OK, Susan, gotcha.
Just leave it up to us.
We'll get the money back to you
– Nae bother and nae fuss."
Meanwhile poor Mr Meredith,
Unaware of his fate,
Drove at a steady 60,
While his wife sat there and ate,
And a couple of miles behind him
A police car, flashing blue lights,
Looked for the red Fiesta
To get him bang to rights.
And the gap between them lessened
As cars got out of the way.
For when a police car flashes us,
We normally tend to obey.
And breathe a little sigh of relief
And thank our lucky stars.
As the police sweep past, a-chasing
Some other car, not ours.
But just when Mr Meredith
Was in danger of having to stop,
Looked round and saw the cop.
Now, the car that Reg was driving
Was stolen property.
And Reggie's basic instinct
Was to stop on the gas and flee.
And so he went up to 90,
And then went into a skid,
And then was hit by the policeman

(Whose name, I think, was Sid).
And there was a massive pile-up.
Of 100 cars or more,
Who all crashed into each other,
And lay there, doc to door.
While further down the motorway
The Meredith family
Carried on quite blithely
To their day out by the sea.
And when they read the paper
The next day, back at base,
Father's mouth dropped open
And a happy smile came to his face.
"We were lucky yesterday, mother.
When we went down the M.
There were masses of cars in a
pile-up."
– See this picture of them!"
"What was the cause?" said Mother.
"Police chase, apparently.
Going too fast in the fast lane
And then – well, you can see."
"Well, we were lucky," said Mother
Looking for wood to touch,
And when she said she was lucky,
She didn't know how much.
Now listen, all you drivers,
And harken well to me,
Next time you go to London
Or down the M3 to the sea.
When the police sirens are
sounding
And the lights behind are blue,
Ask not whom they are chasing
– The siren blares for you!

Can divorce make us all rich?

Marriage break-up boosts economic activity, but increases the gap between rich and poor

Thanks to Charles and Di's divorce the country is going to be millions richer. Or rather, that is what the economic statistics would show if it were possible to unbundle them – which is a powerful reason for us all to be profoundly concerned about the economic costs of divorce. Let's look at some numbers, first of all for the additional economic activity generated, and then for the impact on the taxpayer.

The legal costs for an agreed £15m settlement like this ought not to be more than £500,000. Technically, this is not an unusual case by British or even international standards, but I suspect the costs of the royal divorce will turn out to be somewhat above the norm, because the associated publicity will require the lawyers to do things they would not otherwise do. So there will be a lot of additional hours, and since lawyers charge by the hour this will be expensive. We may need to increase the estimate above by a factor of up to five.

All these fees, like all legal activity, appear in the country's Gross Domestic Product. From the point of view of national accounts it is irrelevant whether people spend money on lawyers, BMWs or a health club – to choose three of the big ticket items in the Charles/Di sphere. They all show in the nation's GDP, although since the BMW is imported, only the sales, advertising and servicing for that item would register. National statistics make no moral judgements about the usefulness of the activity, they just record it.

Indeed, from a purely economic point of view you could actually argue that it is better for the country that we should spend money on divorce than on buying imported cars, for one carries a balance of payments cost, whereas the other has no import content.

Exactly the same arguments apply to all the legal costs of the other 200,000-odd divorces that take place each year in the UK: they increase GDP. If they did not take place, all the associated costs would not appear and, notionally, the country would be poorer.

There is, however, an additional element to the Charles/Di divorce which does not apply to that of lesser mortals. This is the additional activity generated in the media and entertainment businesses. Every additional news programme, every book, every extra sale of a magazine, every syndicated photo, all add to our GDP. Putting a figure on all this must be guesswork



HAMISH MCRAE

because you cannot know how much attention the world would give to the couple had their marriage continued. But my own guess, for what it is worth, would be well into the hundreds of millions, maybe upwards of a billion.

If that sounds a bit absurd, consider the revenues of a blockbuster movie such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. According to the latest tally of Screen International, that is now coming in at \$194.2m, or £130m. Sure the film was cute and it struck a chord, but it was not that special. Lady Di has greater recognition worldwide than Hugh Grant, even now. So I cannot believe that the world-

It's better we spend money on divorce than imported cars

wide revenues of the movie *A Royal Wedding and a Divorce* would not be substantially larger.

If this sounds mouth-wateringly lucrative, there is another and much sadder tally that also needs to be done. This concerns the bill footed by ordinary people for the breakdown of other people's marriages. The Charles/Di case is unusual in that, presumably, it will be funded entirely by the husband's family – it would be a bit rough if we all had to stump up. But in most cases that is precisely what happens: the taxpayer has to subscribe.

Legal aid alone for divorce is running at £250m a year. Think about it: that is £15 for every family in the land – the entire tax on a tank of petrol – taken away from people who are married, or who choose not to get married, and given to the lawyers of people who choose to get divorced.

And the total bill is much larger. The most thorough study on the cost to the taxpayer of separation and divorce I have been able to find was published back in 1990 and refers to the 1987/88 tax year. It was carried out by Compass, a consultancy group, for Relate, the charity specialising in mar-

riage guidance. Even then the total cost of divorce worked out at £1.3bn. Legal costs were actually quite a small proportion of the total, with the largest items being the social security payments (supplementary benefit, one-parent benefit, family income supplement and housing benefit) which totalled more than £1bn between them. The other main cost was health, for when families break up, people are more likely to take time off work for illness. How should one gross up the figure for today? If the cost has risen in line with social security spending in general, it is not going to be less than £3bn, maybe nearer £5bn.

Thus very large amounts of money, equivalent to a couple of percent of the standard rate of income tax, are being taken away from one group of people and given to another. This is not to make any moral judgement about the rights and wrongs of divorce – let's leave that to Lord Mackay and his critics – nor is it to comment on the extent to which the state should transfer money between its citizens. It is simply to say that it is happening.

Not all these payments appear in GDP. Most are simply transfers. But the legal costs and the health care costs do show up, for these represent additional activity. However counter-intuitive it might seem, if someone is ill as a result of the stress of divorce, the cost of the medical care, the insurance and so on, all appear as a rise in GDP.

Understanding this is one of the clues to understanding one of the oft-noted phenomena of our age: the figures show that the country is getting richer, for GDP per head is rising, but most people compare their lives now and 10 years ago, and do not feel any richer. Anyone who does will almost certainly be working a lot harder now than then. This puzzle is partly because we are all unreasonable, in that we have a rosier view of the past than it perhaps deserved. But it is partly, because things such as family breakdown, or rising crime, add to GDP but do not enhance our personal living standards.

The more orderly a society is – the less it needs to devote funds to police, lawyers, social security – the greater the resources available to spend in health clubs or to buy more BMWs.

In one sense the sad story of the royals is the story of so many of their citizens, with a few noughts added on to the end.



For richer, for poorer: Prince Charles and Princess Diana's divorce will add millions of pounds to GDP

Photograph: Kent Gavin

Family lawyers have different rules for rich and famous clients, says Raymond Tooth

What is the difference between a celebrity divorce and an ordinary one? The simple answer is money. While an ordinary couple might be arguing over a four-bedroom house and an income of £50,000, a wealthy family and their lawyers have a very different set of negotiations.

Surprisingly enough, great wealth can make things much simpler. One might imagine that there would be months of arguments over every last penny in every account, but there is something known as the "rich man's defence", where a client being sued for divorce can state that he is worth not less than £1 million, and can pay whatever the court orders. In these cases, the court will generally be reasonably realistic, and as long as the asset value sum stated is not challenged, there is no need for a massive investigation into his worth.

Of course, if there is a big difference in what someone says they are worth and what their partner claims, there will be an investigation, and the courts require full and frank disclosure. The aim is generally to achieve a clean

break settlement, with both sides provided for.

Aristocratic couples have particular problems – and the Royal Family might be said to be in this category. The Duke of X may have lots of properties and acres of countryside, but none of them will belong to him outright. So when the Duchess sues for divorce, the usual thing is to sign over a property to her for life.

We try to remain friends with our clients, but we are not there to pick up the pieces

which will revert to the family trust on her death. A much-married aristocrat might have several houses occupied by former spouses. In the case of the Prince and Princess of Wales, Kensington Palace looks likely to be the property signed over to the Princess for life.

Publicity is a great danger in a case like this. Thankfully, it is reasonably rare for one side to start using the press to try to force the hand of the other, but

it does seem to be a factor with the Prince and Princess. If I were advising either side, I would suggest insisting that nobody says anything publicly unless a statement has been agreed by both sides – and I would threaten an injunction to silence a party that refused to comply.

Much has been made of the question of the Princess's title after the divorce.

But there is a clear protocol for noblewomen who are divorced, which is the one that the Royal Family seems happy to follow. If the Duchess of Nottingham Hill Gate were to divorce, she would become Anna, Duchess of Nottingham Hill Gate; if the Duke remarries, his new wife becomes the Duchess of Nottingham Hill Gate. Having one person named Diana, Princess of Wales, whether she is known as Her Royal

Highness or not, does not mean that there could not be another Princess of Wales, or even several.

The most difficult problems always arise over children. In this case – and in many others where wealthy families are concerned – everyone must be grateful for boarding schools. There is no need for complicated arrangements to shut the young princes to and from their parents: the school is *de facto* in charge of them during term time and their holidays can be shared between their parents.

Divorce can bring a lot of pain, and a lawyer often has to give emotional support to clients. I know the lawyers involved in this case, and both are excellent at their jobs – I am sure they will be doing their best to make this divorce as painless as possible. When it is all over, the lawyers walk away – we try to remain friends with our clients, but we are not there to pick up the pieces after the divorce goes through.

The writer is a senior partner, specialising in divorce, at Sears Tooth.

Finding a real job for Bobby

Our police force is not about crime, it's about symbols, says Peter Waddington

The Audit Commission, like most of us, believes it knows what the police are employed to do: prevent and detect crime. It is against this definition that it has assessed the effectiveness of the police in its report "Streetwise – Effective Police Patrol", published yesterday. The commission finds the police in general, and beat patrol in particular, to be woefully inadequate, and concludes that the public's demand for "more hobbies on the beat" is misplaced.

Certainly there is precious little evidence that police officers wandering aimlessly about have much impact on crime. Establishing a police force suppresses criminal activity to an enormous extent. But the number of police and their deployment has hardly any discernible impact. The reasons are apparent as soon as the mythology of policing is stripped away.

First, virtually no society has enough police officers. A force of 130,000 – one officer for 500 citizens – seems reasonable. But those officers must provide 24-hour cover, and will need time off for leave, training and sickness. Even the most avid supporter of more "hobbies on the beat" will also demand detectives, traffic patrols, dog handlers and mounted officers, and all the other specialisms that are taken for granted. As the Audit Commission acknowledges, this almost inevitably means that sizeable towns are actually policed by a handful of officers.

Second, even if there were enough police patrolling the streets it is unlikely they would stumble across much crime. Some years ago Home Office researchers calculated that under the most favourable circumstances a patrolling police officer would pass within a hundred yards of a burglary in progress once every eight years. Even then, it is unlikely that the officer would be aware of the proximity, since the burglar would be securely hidden from

view in someone else's property. Third, when it comes to discovering offences and detecting offenders, the police are not the main players. Ordinary members of the public are far more influential: if you and I decide not to report crimes (and we do so roughly a third to a quarter of cases) then the police remain ignorant of them; unless the offender is unambiguously identified at the time of the offence, there is little likelihood of an arrest.

Finally, it is facile to believe that the police could do much to influence crime. Let me illustrate this with the prosaic example of fairs. Before the late 19th-century fairs were occasions for social mayhem, not infrequently concluding with the deployment of the militia. All this changed about a hundred years ago, not because of anything the police did, but because

If the police are not the authority on the streets, who is? Local yobs? Drug dealers?

of the influence of Phineas T. Barnum. It was the commercialisation of fairs that transformed them into orderly and relatively crime-free forms of respectable entertainment. The decision of government to relax restrictions on gaming or loosen the regulation of public-house opening times is likely to have a more profound effect on crime than anything the Audit Commission could conceivably recommend.

So as an instrument of crime-fighting, policing is largely an irrelevance. This is true not only of Britain, but throughout the world. Does this mean the police have universally failed, or that the criteria against which they are measured are inappropriate?

Certainly, the police do much more than simply fight crime, indeed more of their time is devoted to other tasks. They are increasingly a "secret

social service", a role deplored in a recent government White Paper and despised by the police themselves.

The problem is that it is enormously difficult to distinguish clearly between what is and is not "police work". A missing child may tragically turn out to be a murder; a collapsed elderly person may have been the victim of crime; a crashed car might be stolen. The division between crime and non-crime is a permeable one indeed.

There is more the police could do to deal effectively with the enormous range of demands the public makes on them. However, the greatest inhibition is the belief that solving crime is the principal task of the police. In this, the Audit Commission is more culpable than most. The persistent emphasis that it has given to crime-fighting in its various reports into

the law and ultimately the state itself. Consider the lengths to which the authorities go to ensure that RUC officers can patrol the streets of Northern Ireland: a squad of heavily armed soldiers, with others in reserve, escorts a lone constable. This cannot conceivably be justified in crime-fighting terms, but testifies to the symbolic importance of patrol.

There is a nice irony in all this, for the available evidence indicates that crime flourishes in conditions devoid of an authoritative order. The murder rate in New York has declined markedly in the last few years. The Commissioner of the New York Police attributes this reduction to police action targeting beggars, fare-dodgers and windscreen cleaners at traffic lights. The connection is known as the "broken windows hypothesis": once a single window is broken and not repaired, the remaining windows in an empty building are smashed. Maintaining low-level order sustains a virtuous cycle that militates against more serious crime. The withdrawal of authority from public spaces, of which the disappearance of the beat police officer is merely one part, leans in the opposite direction. If the police are not the authority on the streets, who is?

The local yobs? Drug dealers? The Audit Commission report on beat patrol poses a fundamental dilemma now being experienced by many public services: how do we establish the value of such symbolic functions? Economic rationality and public accountability demand that public services such as the police use their resources effectively to achieve purposes of which the public approve. But symbolic functions are inherently difficult to evaluate. The danger is that they will therefore be ignored and left to wither.

The writer is professor of sociology at the University of Reading, and author of *'Culling the Police'* (Avebury 1993).

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obituaries / gazette

Dr Daniel Cunningham

Daniel Cunningham was interested primarily in the control of human breathing, with its ramifications into exercise, body temperature, asphyxia, anaesthesia, disease, mining, diving, aviation and mountaineering, and it is a tribute to his distinction that not only the first four-minute mile (Sir Roger Bannister), but also the first conqueror of Everest (Sir Edmund Hillary), should have trodden the rolling rubber floor in the Oxford University Laboratory of Physiology.

Daniel Cunningham was born in Kausaki, India in 1919, the son of Dr John Cunningham, IMS, Director of the Pasteur Institute, Madras, whose brothers were Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham and General Sir Alan Cunningham. Dan, after nine years at Loreto, won a Nuffield Medical Exhibition to Worcester College, Oxford. In passing the First examinations for the Oxford BM BCh he won the Theodore Williams Scholarships in Physiology and Anatomy, the subject in which his grandfather had achieved world-wide fame. He went to Edinburgh for his clinical course, and there, with his distinguished contemporaries Gus Born and D.H. Clark, persuaded the authorities to accept their newly condensed syllabus, which allowed them to qualify six months earlier than normal, and so enter the forces early.

He had an adventurous war in the RAMC and the 3rd Parachute Brigade, with whom he served from Normandy to the Baltic and landed at Arnhem. In September 1945 Dr H.M. Sinclair was looking for doctors to lead his nutritional survey teams in Germany, and, remembering Cunningham's spectacular performance at Oxford, got him seconded as Major, RAMC, to lead the headquarters team in Düsseldorf.

By dint of his tact and intelligence, Cunningham made a great success of this, but administrative problems outside his control prevented completion of his work on the normal plasma protein concentrations in subjects suffering from hunger oedema and nocturia.

Back at Oxford, he got First Class Honours in Physiology in 1947 with Geoffrey Dawes as his tutor, and then succeeded to the Radcliffe Medical Fellowship of University College, of which he became an Emeritus Fellow. He proved to be a devoted tutor, and when appointed, after holding the Schorstein Research Fellowship, to a Lectureship in

the University Laboratory of Physiology, a productive and co-operative research scientist.

His interest in human nutrition naturally brought him towards the respiratory and metabolic side of physiology, of which C.G. Douglas was the leader in the Laboratory. He was the survivor of the important school of human physiology founded by John Scott Haldane, father of the biologist Jack Haldane (JBSH) and the writer Naomi Mitchison, and claimed by Daniel Cunningham as his scientific hero.

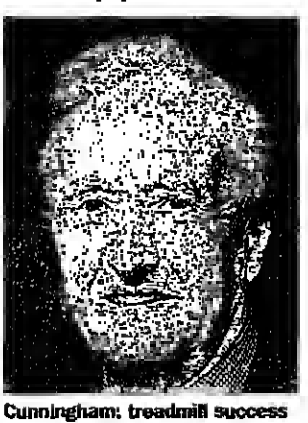
Unlike his son, J.S. Haldane had misgivings about representing the phenomena of living organisms by means of the electrolyte of the humble Leclanché or "dry" cell, or decreased by the ingestion of baking soda. JBSH was typically one of the first to ingest ammonium chloride, and found that it aggravated his already somewhat inflammable disposition. One of Cunningham's guinea-pigs exhibited the opposite effect, no doubt attributable to his calm conduct of the exhausting four-hour experimental sessions.

Cunningham thus demonstrated that the extremely powerful technique, easily and productively used in the physical sciences, of separation of factors, was applicable to the more complicated field of human physiology. Having shown its value in steady-state situations, he spent the latter part of his career in respiratory physiology investigating transient and oscillatory stimuli, and as a reviewer and lecturer.

In his college as Senior Fellow he played an important part in the election of new Masters. His success in his chosen career was due to his qualities as a human being: modesty, great general ability and determination, an analytical intellect of high quality capable of holding many disparate and complex ideas together, as shown particularly in his lecturing, and great courtesy, humour, integrity and honesty.

He was fortunate in having a remarkable wife, Judith Hill, a professional violinist. Their son is a consultant nephrologist, and their daughter an art historian, expert in English churches.

Brian B. Lloyd
Daniel John Chapman Cunningham, physiologist: born Kausaki, India 21 October 1919; Radcliffe Medical Fellow, University College, Oxford 1947-96; married 1947 Judith Hill (one son, one daughter); died Oxford 26 February 1996.



Cunningham: treadmill success

Go directly to investigate the effect of oxygen lack at various CO₂ concentrations, controlled by a feedback system. The CCG papers indicated that in contrast with the linear relation between CO₂ and ventilation (V_E measured as litres of air breathed per minute), the relationship between oxygen (O₂) and ventilation was hyperbolic. With his colleagues Cunningham eagerly accepted this outline of the V_E CO₂ O₂ as the framework for investigating a range of factors affecting V_E.

These included body temperature, noradrenaline, and blood acidity increased by swallowing ammonium chloride, the electrolyte of the humble Leclanché or "dry" cell, or decreased by the ingestion of baking soda. JBSH was typically one of the first to ingest ammonium chloride, and found that it aggravated his already somewhat inflammable disposition. One of Cunningham's guinea-pigs exhibited the opposite effect, no doubt attributable to his calm conduct of the exhausting four-hour experimental sessions.

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Andrew Heath

Andrew Heath was one of a new breed of British diplomat. He was at ease in the traditional diplomatic role, in his case specialising in the Arab world. But he also made his mark handling the complex economic and trade policy issues which have played an increasingly important part in British diplomacy over the past decade.

He grew up in Clapham, an old map of which he proudly displayed at home. From Christ's Hospital he went as a scholar to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. There he found time to indulge his twin passions of cricket and motorcycles, while taking a First in Classics

and acquiring a lifelong interest in the mechanics of language. He joined the Diplomatic Service in 1975 after doing Voluntary Service Overseas in what was then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe since 1980).

His first job in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was in Middle East Department, covering Iran and Iraq. He spent 18 months learning Arabic before being posted to Amman, Jordan. There he developed a wide range of contacts, from the royal court to the local souk. Back in London in 1981, he worked first in the Cabinet Office. After a short period handling the aftermath of the

Grenada crisis he returned to Middle East Department before being posted to Kuwait in 1985. This gave him his first taste of economic work.

Building on that expertise, Heath then went to Washington for four years, where he did much to influence United States trade policy in areas affecting the United Kingdom. Back in London as Assistant Head of the West European Department, he honed his skills as a manager and policy-maker. His door was always open. As Deputy High Commissioner in Wellington since 1993, Heath won high praise for his clear-minded approach to his

work and contact-making skills. In a typically self-effacing way, he contributed much to the success of the Prime Minister John Major's visit to New Zealand for the 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. A promising career was tragically cut short when he was killed in a road accident on his motorbike in New Zealand.

The key to Andrew Heath's character was his utter straightforwardness. His quiet cleverness, dry humour, sound judgement, and unfailing kindness and courtesy won him respect and friendship wherever he went. Nothing was too much

trouble. No demand ruffled his determination calmly to unravel every problem, without preconceptions or prejudice.

Heath was a devoted family man. He and his wife Christina brought generosity and a sense of fun, as well as a shared love of good cooking, to entertaining friends and contacts alike. He took great pleasure in playing with his two young sons, initiating them and others into the mysteries of modern computing, and last year captaining the Wellington diplomatic cricket team to victory over the New Zealand Parliamentarians.

Sherard Cowper-Coles



Heath: new British diplomacy

Andrew Heath, diplomat: born London 17 April 1953; Deputy High Commissioner to New Zealand 1993-96; married 1982 Christina Friday (two sons); died Shannon, NZ 25 February 1996.

Terence Armstrong

You always knew when Terence Armstrong was around - his laughter filled the air. Generations of polar scientists, of all ages and disciplines, who passed through the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, in the course of almost 50 years, will remember what a happy place he made it. His meticulous scholarship, kindness, courtesy and inability, borne of a deep Christian faith, to speak ill of anyone, touched his vast circle of friends, and all he did.

Armstrong was the first boy to study Russian at Winchester. He went up to Magdalene College, Cambridge in 1938 to read Modern Languages under Dame Elizabeth Hill, who, he said, "taught him how to study". With the Army Intelligence Corps from 1940 to 1946, he served in many theatres, was wounded at Arnhem, and on 8 May 1945 led a small group of British soldiers into Oslo, the first of the liberating forces. Returning to Cambridge in 1947, he was appointed to a Fellowship in Russian at the SPRI, and later to an *ad hominem* Readership in Arctic Studies.

From the beginning of the Cold War, Armstrong's work was virtually the only source of information in the West on the current situation in the Soviet North. In the years before fieldwork was possible, he was tireless in monitoring and interpreting Soviet newspapers and specialist periodicals. His interests covered exploration and settlement, economic development, and the destiny of native peoples. His skill in discovering and synthesising previously unknown material from Russian sources was always revealing. His book *Russian Settlement in the North* (1965) was a major contribution, not only to the history of the region, but also to the comparative study of European colonisation world-wide.

His studies of the demography, literature and schooling of the 26 indigenous peoples of the north threw a searching light on wider Soviet nationality policy at a time (in the Sixties and Seventies) when ethnic conflict was assumed to be a thing of the past. His annual digests of the movements of Soviet Arctic shipping, published in *Polar Record*, provided the most accurate and comprehensive picture of an activity that was crucial to the extraction of minerals and thus to the entire Soviet economy.

Armstrong was much liked in the Soviet Union. On arriving in Moscow, the day after the death of his closest Russian friend, the geographer Boris Kremet, he was asked to give the funeral oration - a rare honour for a foreigner in those suspicious times. While he did not shrink in his writings from making judgements about the intentions and effects of Soviet social and economic policies, their balance and fairness made him trusted throughout the Soviet polar research community, who also appreciated their sheer informativeness.

On a visit to Siberia in the 1960s, he was asked by his hosts to confirm that he was responsible for a detailed map of local internal air routes which had appeared under his name in *Polar Record*. With some apprehension, he replied that he was, and was astonished at the response: "Thank you so much, it is the most accurate map of

our own region we have been able to find." In all his work, Armstrong was careful to ensure the steady build-up of Russian holdings in the SPRI. It did not surprise him that in recent years, Russian scholars have come to the Institute's library to find out what was going on in their own country in the Communist years.

Armstrong applied his unique knowledge of the Russian north to the wider study of society throughout the Arctic. He worked extensively in Canada and Alaska with scholars and administrators such as Graham Rowley, George Rogers, Vic Fischer and Frank Darnell. In 1976, he became, with Darnell, a founder member of an international committee on cross-cultural education in the north, and two years later published, with Rowley and Rogers, a seminal study entitled *The Circumpolar North*.

McGill University awarded him an honorary LLD in 1963 and the University of Alaska an honorary DSc in 1980. In 1978 he was awarded the Victoria Medal by the Royal Geographical Society for outstanding contributions to



Armstrong: Arctic studies

geographical scholarship. He was Honorary Secretary of the Hakluyt Society 1965-90, and Honorary Treasurer of the International Glaciological Society 1963-70.

Just those characteristics which made the SPRI such a happy place were also brought to bear on the foundation and nurturing of Clare Hall, of which Armstrong was made a Founder Fellow in 1964 and later Vice-President.

In 1943 Terence Armstrong married Iris Forbes. With their four children, they were an incomparable team, supporting each other in all they did, whether it was in the University or the village of Harston, in which they lived for more than 40 years. They were mainstays of the parish church. A warm welcome and intellectual stimulation were found at Harston House by a vast number of scholars, whether they had "snow on their boots" or not.

Terence Armstrong did not aspire to leadership in the hierarchical sense, but whatever he put his hand to was changed for the better.

John Heap

Terence Edward Armstrong, polar scholar: born Otford, Surrey 4 April 1920; Fellow in Russian, Scott Polar Research Institute 1947-56; Assistant Director of Research 1956-77; Acting Director 1982-83; Founder Fellow, Clare Hall, Cambridge 1964-96; Reader in Arctic Studies 1977-83; Vice-President 1985-87; married 1943 Iris Forbes (two sons, two daughters); died Harston, Cambridge 21 February 1996.

David Fryer, solicitor, died 27 February, aged 59. Secretary-General, Royal Town Planning Institute 1976-96.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

WHEELER on 1 February to Jacqueline (nee Allport) and Vaughan, a son, Hwa Lawrence.

DEATHS

KENNY Patrick, died peacefully on Tuesday 27 February. Much loved by us all - wife Della, children Kevin, Dermot and Siobhan, grandchildren and sisters. Funeral Thursday 7 March at 1.15pm, St Monica's RC Church, Palmer Green, N13. Family flowers only.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Prince of Wales will visit the West of Scotland, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, on 10-12 March. The Prince of Wales will visit the East of Scotland, Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow, on 13-15 March. The Prince of Wales will visit the North of Scotland, Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow, on 16-18 March. The Prince of Wales will visit the South of Scotland, Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow, on 19-21 March.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Band will play at 10.30am on the steps of the Palace.

Birthdays

Mr Harry Belafonte, actor and entertainer, 69; Mr David Broom, show jumper, 56; Mr Douglas Burr, founder, All-England Jumping Course, Hickstead, 68; Sir Robert Calderwood, former chief executive, Strathclyde Regional Council, 64; Mr Nigel Cowley, cricketer, 43; Mr Roger Daltry, singer and actor, 52; Mr Andrew Foulds, actor and MP, 73; Sir Allan Green QC, former Director of Public Prosecutions, 61; Air Chief Marshal Sir Lewis Hodges, former Deputy Commander of the Chief of the Air Force, 78; Mr Michael Kerr, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 75; Professor James Lister, paediatrician, 73; Mr John Napier, theatrical designer, 52; Mr Mike Read, broadcaster, 48; Commandant Dame Nancy Robertson, former director of the WRNS, 87; Mr David Scott Cowper, son, yachtsman, 54; Mr Mark Todd, Three Day Eventer, 40; Mr Gen Philip Toner, former Commandant, Royal Military Academy, 79; Mr Brian Walters, golfer, 56; Sir Gerald Whent, chief executive, Rascal Telecom plc and Vodafone Group, 69.

Anniversaries

Births: Sir Samuel Romilly, law reformer, 1757; Frederic-François (Fryderyk Franciszek) Chopin, composer, 1810; Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, architect, 1812; Lynton Giles Strachey, author and biographer, 1889; Roger Martin du Gard, playwright and novelist, 1881; Alison Gillin Kilfer, broadcaster, 1949; James David Graham Niven, actor, 1910; Dinah Shore (Frances Rose Shore), singer, 1917; Deanne Thomas Campion, poet and composer, 1620; George Herbert, clergyman and poet, 1833; Thomas Edmond, poet, 1713; George Grossmith, comedian

and singer, 1912; Mack Gordon (Morris Gittler), lyricist, 1909; Jackie (Jack Leslie) Coogan, actor, 1984. On this day: Mozambique was discovered by Vasco da Gama, 1498; 1,200 French Huguenots were massacred at Vassy, 1562; the *Spectator* was first published, 1711; Charles I of Spain expelled the Jesuits from the country, 1767; slavery was abolished by Pennsylvania, the first US state to do so, 1780; all the States of the American Union ratified the articles of Confederation, 1781; Ohio became the 17th of the United States; Mehmet Ali of Egypt massacred the Mamelukes and obtained total power, 1811; Texas was annexed by the United States, 1845; Nebraska became the 37th of the United States, 1867; Yellowstone Park was set aside as a US national park, 1872; Sir Dunstan's 18th Regiment's Park was opened as a hotel for the blind, 1915; the 19-month-old son of Charles Lindbergh, aviator, was kidnapped, 1932; the United States tested a hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll, 1954; the Soviet spacecraft *Venus 3* touched down on Venus, 1966; after the Watergate burglary, seven of Nixon's aides were indicted, 1974. Today is the Feast Day of St Aubin or Abbanus of Angers, St David or Dewi, St Felix III, Pope, St Rudisind or Rosendo and St Swithbert.

Lectures

National Gallery: Nicholas Penny, "Innocent Abroad (II): Raphael, *Portrait of Two Men (Andrea Mantegna and Agostino Riccio)*", 1pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Imogen Stewart, "Opus anglicanum: English medieval embroidery", 2.30pm.
Tate Gallery: James Runcie, "Cézanne: a day on the mountain", 2.30pm.

Gresham College, Barnard's Inn Hall, London EC1: Professor Heather Couper, "Big Bang to Big Crunch", 1pm.

Luncheons

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Mr Malcolm Riddick QC MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, held a luncheon yesterday at 1 Carlton Gardens, London SW1, in honour of King Hussein of Jordan.
English-Speaking Union: Mrs Edwina Currie MP spoke on her new book, *A Roman's Place*, at a literary luncheon held yesterday by the English-Speaking Union at Dartmouth House, London W1. Mrs Valerie Mitchell, Director-General, ESU, presided. Mrs Veronica McVey, Deputy Chairman, ESU National Committee for England and Wales, also spoke.

British Red Cross

The Princess of Wales, Vice-President, British Red Cross, launched the new charity initiative, Help Aid, at the British Red Cross (150th) Birthday Year Thank You Celebration Party, held yesterday at Lancaster House, London SW1.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 5.30pm.
United Synagogues: 0171-387 4366. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202 2263. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-590 1663. Reform Synagogues of Great Britain: 011-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews: 0171-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Moorfields): 0171-325 1026.

Delayed access to lawyer infringed fair trial

Murray v United Kingdom; European Court of Human Rights. Strasbourg; 8 February 1996

LAW REPORT

1 March 1996

The ECHR held, by 12 votes to seven, that the applicant's lack of access to a lawyer during the first 48 hours of his police detention violated his right to a fair hearing under article 6(1) taken with article 6(3)(c) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR also held, by 14 votes to five, that the drawing of adverse inferences from the applicant's silence during police interrogation and at trial did not violate article 6(1) and (2).

The applicant was arrested in a house in which a Provisional Irish Republican Army informer, Mr L, had been held captive. At the police station the applicant's access to a solicitor was delayed for 48 hours, pursuant to the Northern Ireland (Emergency) Provisions Act 1987. The applicant was cautioned by the police under the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 (SI no 1987/NI 20) that adverse inferences might be drawn if he failed to answer questions at the pre-trial stage. The applicant was interviewed 12 times and cautioned. He remained silent.

At the applicant's trial Mr L

gave evidence that he had been forced to make a taped confession and that after the arrival of the police he saw the applicant at the top of the stairs. The applicant was pulling a tape out of a cassette. The Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, sitting without a jury, discounted evidence that the applicant had recently arrived at the house as not being credible. The Lord Chief Justice drew adverse inferences from the fact that the applicant failed to offer an explanation for his presence at the house and had remained silent during the trial. The applicant was sentenced to eight years imprisonment for aiding and abetting the false imprisonment of Mr L.

The ECHR said that the right to remain silent under police questioning and the privilege against self-incrimination were generally recognised international standards which lay at the heart of the notion of fair procedure under article 6. Whether the drawing of adverse inferences from an accused's silence infringed article 6 was a matter to be determined in the light of all the circumstances of the case, having

particular regard to the situations where inferences might be drawn, the weight attached to them by the national courts in their assessment of the evidence and the degree of compulsion inherent in the situation.

The applicant's insistence in maintaining silence did not amount to a criminal offence or contempt of court. As had been stressed in national court decisions, silence, in itself, could not be regarded as an indication of guilt.

Turning to the role played by the inferences, these were proceedings without a jury. The drawing of inferences was subject to an important series of safeguards. Appropriate warnings must have been given to the accused as to the legal effects of maintaining silence. Moreover the prosecutor must first establish a *prima facie* case against the accused.

It was only if the evidence against the accused "called" for an explanation which the accused ought to be in a position to give, that a failure to give an explanation "may as a matter of common sense" allow the drawing of an inference that there is no explanation and that

the accused is guilty.

Having regard to the weight of the evidence against the applicant, the drawing of inferences from his refusal to provide an explanation for his presence in the house was a matter of common sense and could not be regarded as unfair or unreasonable in the circumstances. There was no violation of article 6(1) and (2). Turning to access to a lawyer, at the beginning of police interrogation the accused was confronted with a fundamental dilemma. If he chose to remain silent, adverse inferences might be drawn against him. If he opted to break his silence, he ran the risk of prejudicing his defence without necessarily removing the possibility of inferences being drawn against him.

Under such conditions the concept of fairness enshrined in article 6 required that the accused had the benefit of the assistance of a lawyer. To deny access to a lawyer for the first 48 hours of police questioning, where the rights of the defence might well be irretrievably prejudiced, was incompatible with the rights of the accused under article 6. There was therefore a breach of article 6(1) taken with article 6(3)(c).

Ying Eui Tan, Barrister

Not Dealing with...
A person said to go five...
BOSTON SAN: 10/10/10

Latest 1...

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\$5bn IB

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CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR, JEREMY WARNER

business

THE INDEPENDENT • Friday 1 March 1996

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

Latest prices set to show signs of housing recovery

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

New signs of recovery in the housing market are expected today with the publication of the first indicator of house prices in February.

Nationwide building society's house price index is expected to show a moderate increase of up to 0.5 per cent after remaining flat in January, reflecting other signs of improvement in the market.

The Halifax house price index, due on Monday, is also likely to show a modest rise. This will be the eighth monthly increase running in this widely used indicator of house prices, although the average price in February probably remained below its level a year earlier.

Optimism that the long-awaited recovery has finally arrived will get another boost within the next week from additional mortgage rate cuts and other loyalty incentives.

Other housing societies are expected to follow shortly Nationwide's move last week to demonstrate the benefits of remaining mutual by reducing its rates to borrowers.

Skipston and Bradford & Bingley are among the societies likely to announce further moves within the next few days. A Skipston spokesman said: "There is no question that we will be announcing something. It is only a matter of time."

Bradford & Bingley led an earlier round in the mortgage war. Bristol & West, Britannia and Yorkshire building societies have also announced discount schemes in recent weeks.

News of the improvement in house prices will follow new figures confirming earlier evidence of a pick-up in activity in January. Adam Cole, an economist at brokers James Capel, said: "The recovery in the housing market is gathering pace."

The number of new home loans approved during the month climbed to 80,000 – the highest since December 1994 – according to Bank of England statistics yesterday. Their level was 13 per cent up on last summer's trough. The figure is a good leading indicator of housing market activity.

The value of new loans approved climbed to £4.92bn, up from December's £4.61bn and £4.56bn in January 1995.

at HSBC Markets, said: "Prices and actual market volumes follow behind approvals, so provided the steady momentum shown by these figures continues, things are shaping up for the best spring house-buying season for years."

The Bank of England also confirmed the January pick-up in mortgage lending reported by banks and building societies. New loans amounted to £1.32bn in total, the highest

since June. This compared with £1.16bn in December and was slightly higher than in January last year. Annual growth in home loans was 4.1 per cent.

Adrian Coles, director general of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, said the year had got off to a positive start. "Transaction and mortgage activity could improve spasmodically rather than rise steadily for some months. However, as long as confidence continues to

strengthen, the housing market should show real improvements during 1996," he said. The British Bankers' Association said there had been a modestly encouraging start to the new year.

The positive signals during the past month have led most analysts to predict higher levels of activity and house prices this year, with some arguing that the recovery could turn out to be more dramatic than most people expect.

3,000 jobs face axe in \$5bn BP-Mobil deal

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Up to 3,000 jobs will go at BP and Mobil in one of the most radical overhauls of the European downstream oil industry announced yesterday. The \$5bn (£3.2bn) merger of the two groups' fuels and lubricants businesses in 43 countries will create a business with sales of more than \$2bn and the strength to challenge the clout of Shell and Exxon in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

It fuelled speculation among City analysts over further rationalisation in the industry. One questioned whether US operators such as Chevron and Texaco, which have a relatively small position in Europe, might pull out altogether.

The venture will include refineries, pipelines, tankage and terminals as well as a network of 9,000 petrol stations across Europe. It pools almost all the BP and Mobil oil operations apart from the act of pumping

it out of the ground. More than 2,000 of the petrol stations are in the UK, making this the biggest network ahead of Esso and Shell. Britain is also home to BP's Grangemouth refinery in Fife and to Mobil's Coryton refinery in Essex.

By joining forces, BP and Mobil will boast a 12 per cent share of the fuels market and will become the leader in lubricants with an 18 per cent market share. The company will shoot to the top of the league in some key European countries including France where individually they might languish in fifth or sixth place. BP shares rose 10 1/2p to close at 559 1/2p.

Joint ventures will be formed in each of the countries concerned including all EU states, Switzerland, Turkey, Cyprus, all of Eastern Europe and Russia West of the Urals. Of the \$5bn of assets to be poured into the venture, \$3.4bn will come from BP and \$1.6bn from Mobil.

John Browne, BP's chief executive, said: "This is a project that could only have been un-

dertaken by BP and Mobil. The European downstream operations of our two companies are uniquely complementary. Bringing them together will produce efficiencies through sharing costs, elimination of duplication and achieving major economies of scale." He said that the marriage, which puts them in the "top tier" of European refining and marketing, will result in joint annual pre-tax savings of \$400m to \$500m within three years.

Lou Noto, chairman and chief executive of Mobil, said: "This is a venture which was not invented in the boardroom but at the working level. John and I agree that we will not nit-pick. We will not be reduced to silly games between the partners and we will not let egos get in the way." Mr Noto added that he believes the savings could go beyond those envisaged at present and stressed that the alliance should be viewed "as a platform for growth".

Sir David Simon, BP chairman, denied that there would

be any problem combining the different company styles.

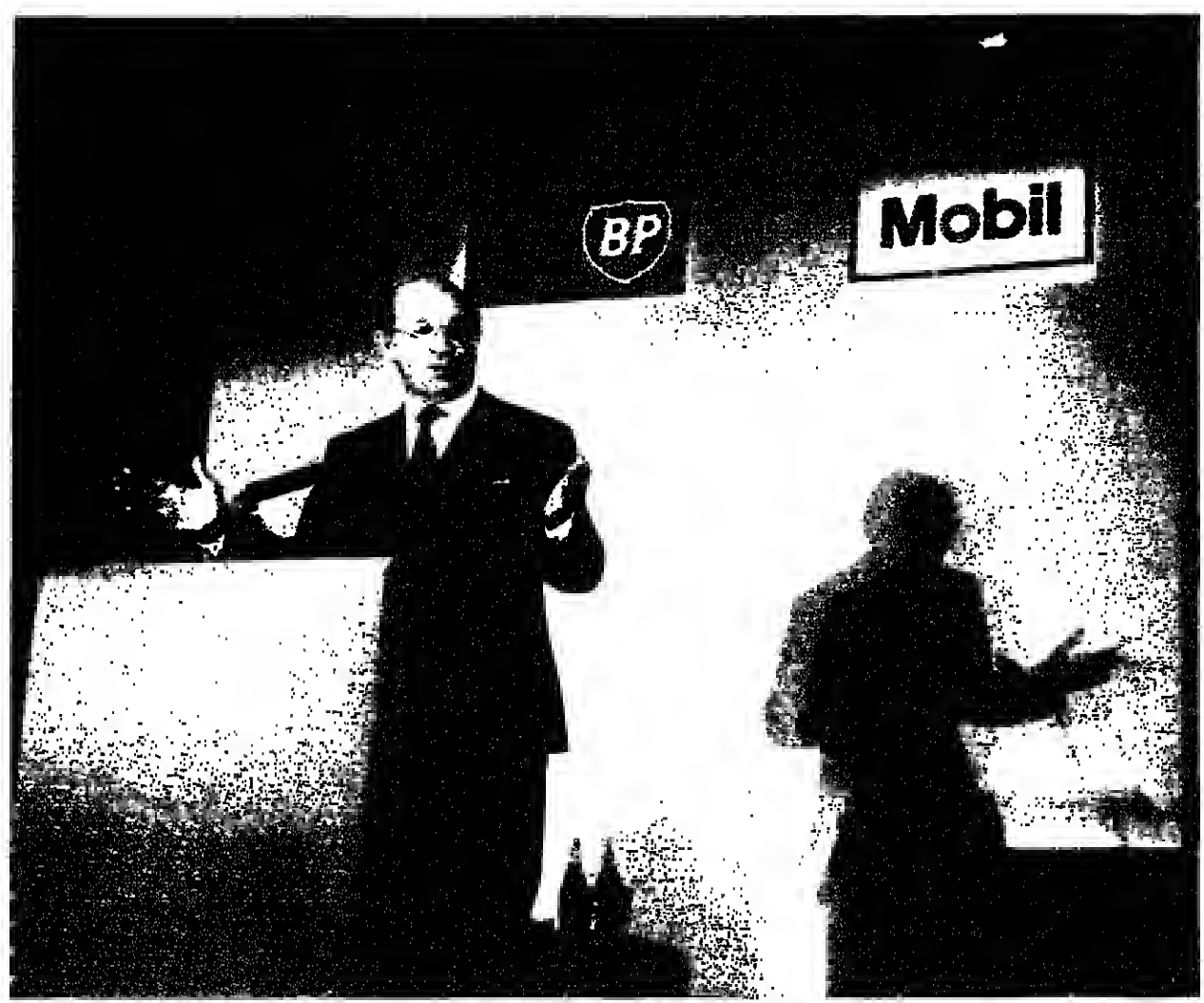
It is not yet clear where exactly the job losses will fall but they are expected to be among the combined non-service station workforce of 17,500. BP has a total world-wide workforce of 56,000 and Mobil 50,000.

BP will operate and have a 70 per cent interest in the fuels partnership which will run activities ranging from refining and manufacturing to petrol station forecourts, all of which will be branded in BP green and carry the joint venture mark, to include Mobil's logo. Mobil will operate and take a 51 per cent interest in the lubricants arm.

The far-reaching nature of the partnership underlines the downstream problems in the oil industry which show no signs of receding. The over-capacity and squeeze on margins in refining are legend and all the oil majors have warned that the problem will continue as new plants continue to be built in regions such as the Far East.

As recently as last month BP said it would sell or close three big refineries in Europe and the US. John Browne, chief executive, said then that BP would retain only those plants that were among the top 25 per cent most efficient in a given region.

Mobil closed a refinery in January last year and Shell recently suggested that it may be forced to cut its European capacity by up to one third. The move by BP and Mobil is like-



Happy marriage: BP chairman Sir David Simon rejected talk of a clash of cultures

Photograph: Jane Baker

The big players in Europe			
Country	BP/Mobil	Shell	Exxon
UK	2,108	2,068	2,108
Western Germany	1,208	1,208	1,208
Eastern Germany	1,208	1,208	1,208
France	1,208	1,208	1,208
Belgium	1,208	1,208	1,208
Netherlands	1,208	1,208	1,208
Portugal	1,208	1,208	1,208
Spain	1,208	1,208	1,208
Austria	1,208	1,208	1,208
Turkey	1,208	1,208	1,208

Notes: Figures do not include stations of Amal, in which Mobil holds a stake. Source: Wood Mackenzie, 1994

'No talks with GEC' says BAe

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Dick Evans, chief executive of British Aerospace, yesterday dampened speculation about an alliance with GEC with a public denial that the two companies were in strategic talks.

The two defence groups regularly discussed projects in which they were both involved, "but there are not structural talks of a fundamental nature," Mr Evans restated that BAe would seek more partnerships, but these were likely to be in the context of pan-European consolidation to compete with the giant US defence groups.

BAe, which yesterday reported pre-exceptional profits up 95 per cent to £330m, has been negotiating with French and German defence groups to reduce overcapacity in Europe. Mr Evans welcomed last week's announcement by France to restructure its defence industry as paving the way to further integration. But he said BAe was not interested in creating a "fortress Europe" in the industry. "The Europeans are simply trying to speak to Americans on equal terms."

He would not give details on any potential partnerships or

their timetable. "National, political and economic behaviour will determine the type of partnerships that BAe will seek. The industry is in a major state of change."

Mr Evans was speaking after the release of BAe's annual results which he said reflected the successful strategy of focusing on core defence and aerospace businesses.

Defence operations saw a profit before interest of £487m compared with £412m in 1994. The results also showed an improving trend at Airbus and lower losses from commercial aircraft, down from £150m to £118m before interest.

Mr Evans said: "The regional jet market continues to improve and I would expect this division to break-even by 1997." Airbus, in which BAe is a partner, had not yet decided whether to go ahead with building the A300 large aircraft. BAe was interested, nor had it held discussions about raising its stake in the European consortium at this stage.

Mr Evans also ruled out suggestions that BAe might go to the aid of the failed Dutch aircraft manufacturer, Fokker.

Results, page 20

Trade gap narrows to £550m

PAUL WALLACE
and DIANE COYLE

Britain's trade balance was better than expected in December as a result of the first surplus with the rest of the EU for more than two years. This followed a sharp decline in imports from Europe: the deficit with the rest of the world increased in January.

The trade figures came as the European Commission published figures showing that the inflation rate in January was 3.2 per cent, compared with the figure of 2.8 per cent on the government's preferred measure of RPIX – the retail price index minus mortgage interest.

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke dismissed the figure as partial and said that the real picture was much more encouraging than

that. Even so, the new interim measure, designed to assess countries' progress towards the inflation qualification for entry into EMU, left Britain missing the target – which must be no more than 1.5 per cent higher than the three best performing countries. In January, the best performer was Finland (0.8 per cent) and the Netherlands was third best, with 1.3 per cent. Britain is challenging the methodology used to compile the new European statistics.

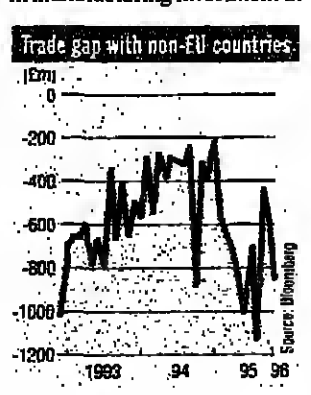
The overall trade deficit of £557m in December surprised the City which had been anticipating a deficit of about £900m. The surplus with the EU was the first since August 1993 as an improvement mainly attributable to a 2.6 per cent fall in imports from other EU members. Exports fell 0.4 per cent.

The 3 per cent fall in imports of semi-manufactured goods suggests that the underlying trade position was flattered by lower stockbuilding, as manufacturers strove to shed excess inventories. The 9 per cent fall in manufacturing investment in

the final quarter of 1995 was reflected in a drop of over 4 per cent in capital goods imports.

The deficit with countries outside the EU, for which information is available earlier, worsened by almost £300m to £890m in January.

Over the year as a whole, the trade gap was £11.0bn, compared with £10.8bn in 1994. The balance was helped by an oil trade surplus of £4.3bn, the highest for 10 years. Separate figures showed that new consumer credit rose by £549m in January compared with £827m in December. This brought the annual growth rate down slightly but it remained a rapid 13.1 per cent in January. The smaller than expected rise led City analysts to conclude that nothing new stood in the way of a further cut in base rates.



Gas connection to Europe gets approval

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Plans for a £500m gas pipeline connecting Britain to mainland Europe took a large step forward yesterday with planning permission for the landing site at Bacton on the Norfolk Coast. The pipeline, in which British

Gas has a 40 per cent interest, is regarded as vital if the UK is to resolve the problem of massive over-capacity which is squeezing the country.

Bacton will be home to the gas compression station at the UK end of the pipeline. The consortium, which includes eight other companies including BP,

Conoco, Amerada Hess and National Power, hopes to export the first gas in October 1998.

The planning permission from the North Norfolk District Council is a boost to the fortunes of beleaguered British Gas, which continues to be dogged by controversy. The company faces liabilities of

about £1.5bn related to contracts with North Sea producers which are forcing it to buy much more gas than it can sell.

The completion of the pipeline will coincide with the opening of the entire domestic market to competition, which starts with a trial in the Southwest in April this year.

Shareholders threaten Park Lane deal

MATTHEW HORSMAN

Angry small shareholders in Park Lane, the London luxury hotel, were last threatening to fight an agreed bid by management and senior shareholders to sell the property to ITT Sheraton, the US hotels group, for £44.5m.

"They are selling the family silver on the cheap," said John Hanson, who represents a family trust holding 10 per cent of Park Lane, and who claims to speak for small shareholders with an additional 4 per cent of the company.

Mr Hanson claimed the company had rejected offers of up to £113m for the hotel in recent years, and said a more realistic value would be around £70-80m.

"This is a luxury hotel, and should fetch a better price," Mr Hanson said. "The current management are just cutting and running."

Shareholders, representing 72 per cent of the company have given their irrevocable support to the offer, according to a statement by ITT Sheraton.

The Park Lane was built in the 1920s by a group of Yorkshire families, whose descendants continue to own it. It was previously listed on the 4.2 market, which was wound up last year. The offer equates to about £145,000 a room for the 311-room hotel. The Ritz was recently sold for about £575,000 a room.

As part of its unsuccessful defence against a £3.8bn bid by Granada, the media and leisure company, hotels group Forte issued a revised valuation suggesting an average of about £285,000 a room.

There was speculation yesterday that ITT Sheraton planned to convert the hotel, in the Mayfair district of London, into a casino, in light of the Government's planned relaxation of gaming laws.

Last month, the US company bought the Sheraton Skyline hotel at Heathrow Airport, which it had been managing.

Daniel Weadock, ITT Sheraton's chief executive, said in a statement: "This strategic blend of acquiring premier hotels in key markets, opening new hotels in markets where it is advantageous, and broadening our base of managed hotels demonstrates our goal to expand our base of leadership in gateway cities."

The sale, even at £45m, encouraged analysts that the hotel market may not be as affected as feared by the resumption of bombing by the IRA. They said the sale was a boost to Granada, which is aiming to sell as much as £2bn of assets to pay down debt following the takeover of Granada.

Market report, page 22

STOCK MARKETS			
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)
FTSE 100	3727.00	+10.00	+0.3
FTSE 250	4215.00	+0.50	+0.0
FTSE 350	1864.10	+4.20	+0.2
FT Small Cap	2052.77	+2.52	+0.1
FT All Share	1840.32	+3.67	+0.2
New York	5481.40	+14.81	+0.3
Tokyo	20125.37	+205.40	+1.0
Hong Kong	11120.00	+138.97	+1.2
Frankfurt	2473.55	+1.05	+0.0

INTEREST RATES			
Short sterling	UK medium gov	US long bond	
1 month	6.19	8.01	8.56
3 months	6.19	8.01	8.56
6 months	6.19	8.01	8.56
1 year	6.19	8.01	8.56

CURRENCIES			
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	
Yesterday	1.5309	0.6532	+0.18
Change	-0.0022	-0.0001	-0.0001
Year Ago	1.61305	0.6523	-0.0001

IT'S GREAT WORKING IN A MODERN OFFICE.
ISN'T IT?
THE OLIVER & CLAIRE STRIP

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by Magnus Grimond

BAe keeps clear of black holes

That British Aerospace produced another set of dull and predictable results yesterday is, perhaps, no bad thing. After years of financial black holes and write-offs it was comforting to see figures that for a second year running did not contain horror stories.

A rise in arms sales, improvements at Airbus Industrie, and another welcome cut in losses from the regional jets business meant pre-tax profits before exceptional items rose to £330m from a restated £169m in 1994. Including charges, the profits rose to £234m from a figure of £208m, which was confused by a complex web of one-off losses and gains from the sale of Rover and aerospace restructuring costs.

Defence reported a pre-interest profit of £487m against £412m in 1994. A 2.4 per cent improvement in margins to 11.4 per cent, on sales that were slightly down at £4,251m, underlined the success in reducing costs. New business kept the total military order book at £9.7bn, the same level as 1994.

On the commercial aerospace side, the area that almost tipped BAe into the abyss four years ago, operating losses were cut to £118m from £156m in 1994. The improvement was all the more creditable because the group was forced to fight for orders for Avro and Jetstream business at the expense of margins.

Profitability at Airbus also improved, though the European consortium is facing very tough competition from Boeing and there are worries about the amount of money BAe would contribute for a new Airbus jumbo jet. BAe was adamant yesterday that it would not enter any project that threatened to increase its cost base. Yet some investment in a larger Airbus is inevitable if the aircraft maker is to keep up with Boeing.

BAe's massive restructuring of non-core assets had reduced the company's net worth to £870m in 1994, from more than £2.6bn in 1991. The forthcoming flotation of the Orange mobile phones operation should see the residual 23 per cent stake marked up from near zero to between £50m and £57m in BAe's balance sheet. The group now looks well on its way to rebuilding the books.

The final dividend was something of a disappointment. The city was hoping for an 8p final rather than yesterday's 7.5p. This brought the total to 12.5p, up 25 per cent, on earnings per share of 116p cent ahead to 48.8p. BAe's policy these days is to keep dividend cover at three times over the longer term.

Despite its recent recovery, the share price, up 1p to 870p yesterday,

still does not reflect the progress so far. With all divisions now showing improvement, and further scope for cost-cutting and consolidation in the defence business, BAe remains a good long-term bet.

Lasmo is leaner after the escape

Lasmo's escape from the clutches of its rival Enterprise Oil in the middle of 1994 has had a galvanising effect on the management. The housekeeping measures introduced following the failure of the bid are already reaping benefits, as yesterday's figures for 1995 show.

Net profits for the 12 months to December came in above expectations at £34m, reversing the previous year's loss of £3m. That was a very respectable result, even after taking account of the massive £24m bid defence costs which depressed the 1994 figures. Lasmo suffered a 5 per cent drop in production to 164,000 barrels a day of oil and gas last year as it sold older, higher-cost production assets. Last year saw the disposal of stakes in the Forties and Beat-

rice fields in the North Sea and an interest in the Malacca Straits in Indonesia. More recently a couple of elderly Canadian fields have gone.

But, along with overhead cuts, Lasmo's portfolio tidying has brought it very close to its target of £3 a barrel operating costs by next year. After shaving a further 7 per cent in 1995, they now stand at £3.17.

Although improving on that will get progressively harder, unit costs will be further reduced by higher production, set to rise to 185,000 barrels a day this year and 210,000 in 1997, and the advent of lower-cost fields. Liverpool Bay, for instance, which came on-stream at the turn of the year, pays tax at 33 per cent compared with up to 80 per cent in mature North Sea fields.

But the excitement in Lasmo lies elsewhere. Test results released yesterday confirm that Lasmo and its partners in the Hassi Berkinie fields in Algeria have the makings of a massive oil and gas reserve.

The five discoveries there to date suggest a reserve potential of 1.5 billion barrels, with Lasmo's share put conservatively at 82 million barrels or 11 per cent of its total reserves. The eventual figure could be at least dou-

ble that, depending on the outcome of further exploration: Lasmo plans 10 wells this year.

Meanwhile, the share price has been run up recently on renewed takeover speculation. Still looks an obvious predator. As one of the world's largest natural gas groups, Lasmo's Indonesian and Algerian assets have obvious attractions.

In the meantime, the shares, down 4p at 184p, still stand at a discount to the 200p net asset value put on them by house brokers NatWest Markets. Good value.

Burford offers shelter

Nigel Wray is one of the whizz kids of the 1980s stock market boom whose investment reputation has survived intact into the recessionary 1990s. Burford Holdings, the property group, is a case in point. Since Mr Wray reversed his *Chartwell* tip sheet group into Burford in 1988, the shares have outperformed the rest of the index by 49 per cent, despite one of the worst property recessions since the war.

The record is impressive. Burford claims to have achieved a compound rate of increase in net assets of 106 per cent since 1987, a return which was heavily boosted by November's de-merger of the Trocadero group, owner of the eponymous leisure complex in London's Piccadilly.

The Trocadero was a classic Nigel Wray deal. It was acquired for £94m in the middle of 1994 having beggared two previous owners. The business is now valued at over £200m on Aim.

Excluding Trocadero, net assets remaining with Burford showed a healthy 16 per cent rise to 104.3p last year. On the same basis, profits before tax slipped from £14.7m to £11.7m in the 12 months to December.

With the £154m raised from the Trocadero deal and other disposals, the group has £154m in cash, leaving it in a very strong position. The potential for something interesting may lie within the group of properties in London's Covent Garden acquired recently from Scottish Widows for £49m.

In the meantime, house brokers BZW expect profits to recover to £14m this year, with net assets climbing to 115p. The shares, unchanged at 107p, are a safe haven in a dull sector.

John Willcock CITY DIARY

An analysts' note full of sound and fury

"A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" is as colourful if tendentious a summary of our research output as any we have seen recently, although to be fair there are at least two idiots involved." So wrote Philip Middleton and Charles Cade, analysts at Merrill Lynch, in a recent note on Edinburgh Fund Managers' proposed takeover of Dunedin.

Taking Macbeth as their inspiration - "The Scottish Play on fund management?" - the pair quoted: "Doth it take away the performance?" Shakespeare's comments here refer to drink rather than fund management, and we believe that the merger should tend to augment performance here.

Then on page four of the note they ask: "Stands Scotland where it did?" This has always struck us as a somewhat otiose question, in that it has remained resolutely north of England for some time now. Let's hope the traditional theatrical curse will not fall on the merger now that the Scottish play's name has been invoked.

SBC Warburg continues to lose corporate financiers at a striking rate. Yesterday Nicholas Fry, formerly a senior director in the corporate finance division at SBC Warburg was poached by NatWest Markets to become its head of UK Corporate Finance. On the same day Stella Coulthurst, another di-

Bowlers, toppers, felt hats, riding hats, tweed caps, panamas, - Christy, the Stockport-based hat maker, has been turning out such headgear since it was founded in 1773. Yesterday the firm bought £4m 43m by Priority Investments, a London-based company founded just six years ago to invest in middle sized businesses. Christy claims it is the only company in the world which still makes the traditional English bowler and top hat, now enjoying a revival following the popularity of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. The company is the official supplier of panamas to the British Olympic team this year, and is a great favorite of Geoff Boycott. More recently the company has expanded into the "fashion-led youth market", turning out Mr Men hats and beanie hats, knitted pull-ons and a crushable bowler. How ghastly.



Shakespeare: Does it have some meaning for mergers?

rector in the same department who had been with SG Warburg since 1985, left to join BZW.

Ms Coulthurst was recruited by Mark Seligman, now BZW's joint chief executive corporate finance, and himself a former Warburg director. With the recent defection of another big cheese, Derek Higgs, to Prudential, does this mean that the Warburg corporate finance side is unravelling since the Swiss takeover?

"No", retorted an SBC Warburg source yesterday. While the bank would say nothing officially, the source said that suggestions of unravelling were "a fired, cracked record that stopped before Christmas. There's no exodus

or flood. Just the normal flow of joiners and leavers."

A gaggle of economics writers from the national press demonstrated their gratitude to the Treasury's Andrew Gimson on his departure as head of the press office by feigning him at London's famous Hungarian restaurant, the Gay Hussar, on Wednesday evening. Mr Gimson sustained his famous discretion till the end, sticking with nothing stronger than a white wine spritzer or two.

The one thing he let slip to the hacks before his departure back to a policy job in the Treasury was the revelation that the press office had had to work hard to persuade Kenneth Clarke not to appear on *Fantasy Football*.

For the uninitiated, this is the late night television programme on football commentary from the footie wall come home. David Baddiel and Frank Skinner, the Channel 4 - a Nottingham Forest fan - thought it would help boost his man of the people image. The minders thought our beer-quaffing, panama-puffing jazz aficionado, the Chancellor was already man of the people enough.

British Aerospace: at a glance

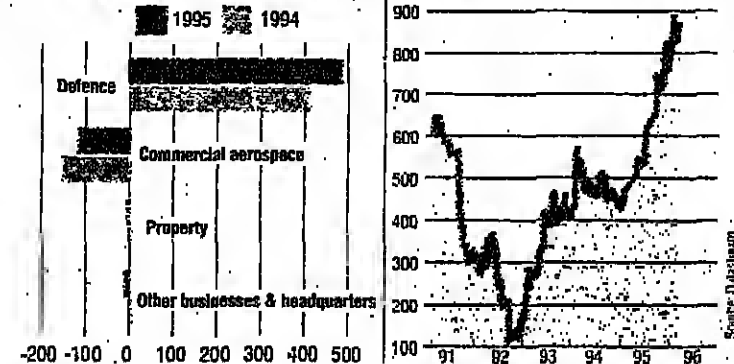
Market value: £4,201m, share price 870p

Five-Year record

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£2m)	9.98	10.7	7.15	12.4	12.4
Pre-tax profits (£m)*	-163	-1,243	-257	208	234
Profits per share (pence)	-2.47	-65.3	-30.4	27.4	27.4
Dividends per share (pence)	25.0	7.0	8.3	10.0	12.5

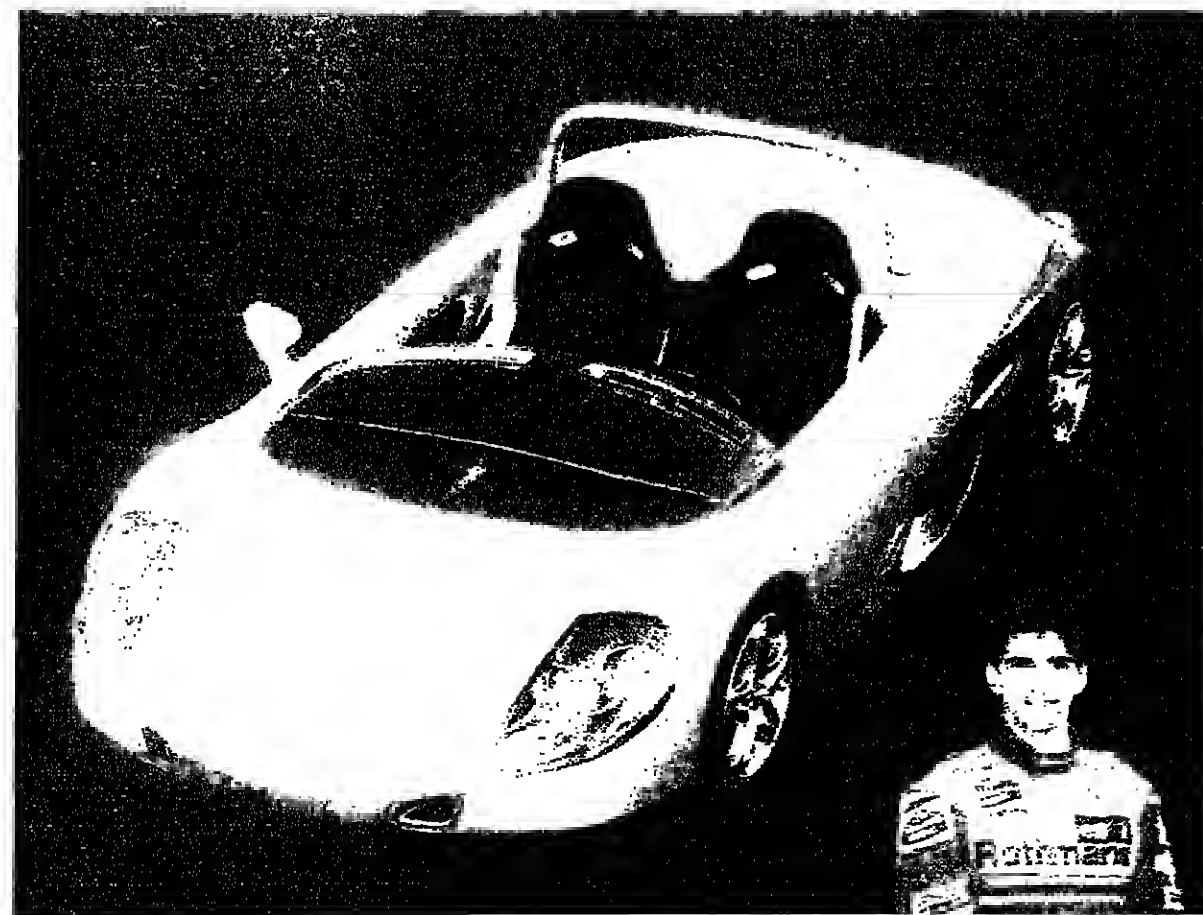
*restated for accounting changes

Profits before exceptional items by business (£m)



Source: Datastream

Win Damon Hill's Renault Spider with THE INDEPENDENT



We would like to give you the chance to win a unique open-topped sports car that has had one careful owner - Damon Hill. Damon, hotly tipped to take this year's Grand Prix crown from Michael Schumacher, will road test our prize Renault Sport Spider, a magnificent mid-engine two seater that was the hit of the Geneva Motor Show.

The Spider, which will retail for around £25,000, has a lightweight aluminium chassis and a 150 bhp 2 litre Cliv Williams engine which gives a top speed of 130 mph.

Though the Spider's high-tech interior and racy, squat lines show its race track pedigree, this is a car that was designed for everyday use. Safety is a prime feature, as is driver comfort and noise reduction.

Acceleration, road-holding, cornering and

breaking are all that you would expect from a designer thoroughbred. Production of the Spider will be strictly limited, and your prize car will carry the Damon Hill seal of approval.

HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning our prize Renault Sport Spider you must collect five differently numbered tokens from the four-teen we are printing in *The Independent* and the *Independent* on Sunday. Today we are printing Token 6; Token 7 will be published tomorrow. The entry form will be published on Saturday 9 March. It must be completed and sent in with your tokens.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
As previously published.

Renault Spider

TOKEN 6

THE INDEPENDENT

MAI merger set to go through

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

The City was betting last night that the proposed merger between MAI and United News & Media would be passed overwhelmingly, on the eve of the deal's first close today.

Shares in MAI, the nominal takeover target under the merger's structure, closed last night at 411p, about even with the all-shares offer from United at yesterday's price of 644p.

Lord Hollick, MAI's chief executive, last night wound up a series of institutional briefings aimed at convincing a sceptical City of the merits of the proposed merger, which has been characterised as "defensive" by most observers.

"There are no great synergies to be had here," said one analyst. "But in the absence of any other bid, it will go through."



Lord Hollick seeking to convince a sceptical City

Hopes that another media company would enter the fray have faded, particularly since last week's dramatic statement from Carlton Communications. Michael Green's TV and video services company, that it would not intervene.

The combined companies, which will have extensive television, magazine and newspaper interests, are expected to post pre-tax profits next year of between £290m and £340m, according to analysts. The unusually broad range of forecasts is a reflection of City doubts about the advantages of the merger. Last year, there were pre-forma operating profits of about £265m.

Analyst at Hoare Govett are among the more optimistic about the proposed merger, which would group MAI's two television licences, Anglia Television and Meridian, along with United's *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express*, the *Star* and magazines and regional newspapers.

They point to Lord Hollick's track record at building profits at MAI, and assume his role as chief executive of the merged companies will bring improve-

ments to United's range of businesses. The chairman of the new company will be Lord Stevens of United.

But other analysts question whether the combination of television and newspapers will generate any additional value. "This is really about backing management, rather than analysing value," Louise Barton, analyst at Henderson Crossfield, said. "We are recommending the merger, but don't see any great synergies." She is also concerned about the likely losses the group will clock up following the launch of the new Channel 5 service, in which MAI has a 30 per cent stake.

The merger marks the first attempt to marry independent television and national newspapers, following the tabling of the new Broadcasting Bill. Analysts expect further activity in the sector.

Daiwa unsure of merger after \$340m fine

DAVID USBORNE
New York

Daiwa Bank yesterday appeared to cast doubt on a merger with Sumitomo, its Japanese rival. Takashi Kaiho, Daiwa's president, said a merger was still an option, but he had no detailed ideas about such a link-up.

He was speaking a day after the bank was fined a record \$340m in the United States for concealing a \$1.1bn unauthorised bond trading loss from American regulators.

As a consequence of the bond trading scandal, which forced Daiwa to close all its operations in the US, the Japanese bank was believed to have accepted a merger with Sumitomo as a way out of its crisis.

In accepting its punishment for covering up huge trading losses by a rogue bond trader over 11 years, Daiwa gave satisfaction to indignant US regulators and itself avoided a lengthy trial. Mr Kaiho also said Daiwa would be able to post profits for current fiscal year ending 31 March.

Announced late on Wednesday, the guilty plea in a Manhattan court brings to an end the whole humiliating mess that

has strained US-Japan economic ties and cast doubt on the bank's very future. Daiwa shares rose on the news in Tokyo yesterday.

In the end, Daiwa, which sold its US operations last month to Sumitomo, pleaded guilty to 16 charges of covering up, conspiracy, falsifying books and obstructing examination of its books by US regulators. Until its plea, the bank had denied all the charges.

Had Daiwa held out, a high profile criminal trial against it would have started on 15 April. A guilty verdict at trial, moreover, could have meant the bank paying a much larger fine, perhaps as much as \$1.5bn.

All that remains to be done in the affair is the sentencing of Toshitake Iguchi, the trader who has already agreed to his guilt in incurring the \$1.1bn loss, and the trial of the New York branch's former general manager, Masahiro Tsuda, who has pleaded innocent to the charges against him.

The pleasure of the American government is evident. Mary Jo White, the US Attorney in Manhattan, said the guilty plea "should serve as a message to other corporations".

IN BRIEF

Hoare Govett boosts ABN Amro

ABN Amro, the Dutch bank that owns Hoare Govett, beat expectations with a 14 per cent rise in 1995 pre-tax profits to just over £1bn. Chairman Jan Kalf said the group's investment banking operations had been the prime engine behind profit growth last year. Hoare Govett has been expanding vigorously, taking on 50 more people, and bonuses next week are expected to reflect a good year. Hoare Govett was involved in five of the seven top UK deals in 1995.

Computer company in Centregold talks

Eidos, the computer game company has confirmed it is in talks which may lead to an offer for Centregold, the troubled video games publisher whose shares were suspended last month. Geoffrey Brown, the former maths teacher who headed Centregold in 1993, has undertaken to accept an offer of 40p per share for his 29 per cent stake. This values his holding at £5m and the company at £16m.

Willis Corroon hit by £36m provisions

Insurance broker Willis Corroon yesterday announced provisions of over £36m to cover the costs of slimming its UK underwriting operations and pulling out of surplus property. The group said it will take 20 years longer than the originally planned 15 years to exit fully from all underwriting obligations. It announced a 38 per cent rise in pre-tax, pre-exceptional profits to £79m. Costs were reduced by £28m in 1995, with a further £10m-plus reduction expected this year. Chairman John Reeve, who joined Willis last November from Sun Life Corp, said the insurance industry globally was inefficient and ripe for the introduction of modern technology.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
British Aerospace (p)	9,740m (5,350m)	234m (208m)	48.8p (22.6p)	12.5p (10p)
Burford Holdings (p)	34.4m (27.4m)	11.7m (14.7m)	3.04p (4.28p)	1.55p (1.75p)
Carroll Group (p)	10m (820m)	55.8m (43.8m)	25.3p (22.8p)	10.4 p 0
Lasmo (p)	637m (648m)	34m (43m)	1.8p (2.4p)	1.25p (1.25p)
Life Sciences (p)	205m (173m)	20.7m (25.4m)	7.8p (10.8p)	4.4p (4.4p)
Sarco Group (p)	22m (260m)	15.2m (12.5m)	15p (12p)	4.7p (4p)
Transatlantic Media (p)	183m (128m)	53.8m (65.0m)	17.58p (16.98p)	14.5p (13.2p)
Willis Corroon (p)	665m (670m)	50.2m (5.6m)	7p (1p)	8.6p (6.0p)

(p) - Profit (p) - Interest (p) - Net

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business



COMMENT

Since the Eurotunnel disaster, there surely cannot be much of an appetite for privately financed projects with anything resembling a tunnel attached to them.

Rail link could succeed where Eurotunnel failed

At last, Richard Branson seems finally to have got something. The national lottery? No chance. Channel 5? Come off it. Well, alright then, but only as part of an eight member consortium with Virgin in a sub-servant position to the City investment bank, SBC Warburg. The real question, however, is not so much whether it was Mr Branson or others that secured the project for London & Continental, as just what the consortium has actually won. Post the Eurotunnel disaster, there surely cannot be much of an appetite for privately financed projects with anything resembling a tunnel attached to them.

In the case of the high speed rail link, there are 26km of the things and that is not the only similarity with Eurotunnel. The proposed method of finance – debt supported by a very sizeable stock market flotation – also bears a marked similarity. Nor do you need much of a memory to know that Warburgs was the bank which convinced a generation of hapless investors to sink their money into Eurotunnel, not just once, but twice.

Enough scepticism, though. There are in fact a number of good reasons for believing that the high speed rail link might succeed where Eurotunnel failed. The first and most important is a whopping £1.5bn in Government and EU grants. Most of this is a capital grant towards the estimated £4bn eventual cost of the project. Though this will

not be paid until well into the project's construction phase, it does provide a degree of comfort not available to Eurotunnel.

The balance is in the form of deferred payments by the Government for use of the track by commuter trains – rental income, in other words. Add this to the revenue stream London & Continental will get from the one-third interest it inherits from British Rail in Eurostar, and the company already has a quite considerable guaranteed income. The idea is that this will be used as a way of guaranteeing to bankers that debt servicing and repayment obligations will be met. The guaranteed income will in some way be securitised. No wonder that even Eurotunnel-scarred bankers are saying, "Hold on, this might actually work".

A further plus point is that there are no contractors in this consortium. True, Arup and Bechtel are closely related towards the bottom of the evolutionary chain, but as design engineers and project managers, they are also an entirely different species. With Eurotunnel, the contractors were allowed to write their own blank cheque. That won't happen this time round.

Furthermore, Eurotunnel began tapping the equity market before it knew in any detail what it was supposed to be building. In this case a detailed design and engineering plan involving expenditure of up to £250m will be completed before a penny's worth of equity is raised on the stock market.

All good reasons, then, why the high speed rail link, the largest project so far to have emerged from the Government's private finance initiative, might work. Even so, it is going to require all SBC Warburg's powers of persuasion to close the credibility gap – the more so since it is equity investors, rather than bankers, who this time will be expected to provide the bulk of the finance.

Stakeholding is a dangerous slogan

Tony Blair may have stirred up more than the hargained for when he pinned New Labour's colours to the stakeholding mast. In a speech yesterday, John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, interpreted this woolly concept as an open door to winning new employment rights. Speaking at a conference organised by the Commission on Public Policy and British Business, Mr Monks added fuel to the debate by arguing that stakeholding could only be built "on a floor of employment rights". He used the occasion to argue for a new industrial relations settlement based on new employment rights for individual employees. These would include, for example, the right to be consulted about major changes in a company through democratically chosen representatives; and the right for unions to be recognised when a majority want it. Rest assured, the Tory party machine will demonise Mr

Monks' words as the smoking gun of re-cidivist trade unionism lurking behind stakeholding rhetoric.

However, it was some less predictable voices at the conference which should give Mr Blair real food for thought about the possible dangers of his new umbrella slogan. Colin Mayer, Professor of Management Studies at Oxford University, drew a contrast between the more rigid economic structures of the stakeholding countries of Europe and the greater flexibility that came with the Anglo-Saxon model of shareholder capitalism. He warned that we could be leaping onto the stakeholder hand-wagon at the very moment when technical innovation made flexibility particularly important.

Another perspective came from Matthew Gavett, a specialist in corporate governance at the London School of Economics. He argued that the real problem with stakeholder capitalism in the UK was not one of excessive power but of impotence. Big fund managers like Hermes and M&G complained they were next to powerless when trying to influence the management of a poorly performing company. That left exit – the sale of their shares – or a takeover battle as their only real sanctions. Reforms were needed to allow shareholders to exercise their voting power on their own resolutions more frequently than the AGM.

The slogan of the stakeholding economy may make for good soundbites for Tony

Blair in the run-up to an election but Labour needs to do a lot more work on the policy if it is to be taken seriously as a solution to the vexed problem of corporate governance in Britain. Let alone the still more ambitious task of improving the performance of the economy.

BP attempts to crunch the customer

The last one out switches off the lights. The rationalisation of great swathes of European industry continues apace with BP and Mobil merging their European downstream activities in a deal which, competition authorities allowing, will almost certainly prove a trend setter. Where's it all going to end?

In theory, the relentless drive towards lower costs in industry and commerce, should result in lower prices. If the market is doing its job as it should, the consequent savings flow into new industries, new technologies and ultimately new jobs. But it is not altruism alone which drives businesses into these huge, rationalising mergers. The motivation is as much about market power and dominance as anything else. Don't be fooled. Competitive pressures may be the immediate cause of the BP/Mobil get together. By becoming number one in Europe, or close to it, however, the ultimate idea is to crunch the customer.

£500,000 for sacked Exchange chief



Slanging match: Michael Lawrence (left) and John Kemp-Welch have given MPs very different versions of events

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Michael Lawrence, fired as chief executive of the London Stock Exchange in early January, agreed a payoff of just under £500,000 yesterday, as an official inquiry into the Exchange looked set to turn into a public slanging match.

The pay-off was well below initial expectations, given the manner of his removal, sources said. Mr Lawrence had opened negotiations for over £1m in compensation for his dramatic removal from the £42,000 a year post.

Refusing to comment yesterday on the details, Mr Lawrence said: "I do not see this as a pay-off for failure, but one for success."

Because of the abruptness of Mr Lawrence's dismissal, and the confirmation that it would result in no change of policy, the Exchange is believed to have feared it had a weak hand in the

pay-off negotiations, and was expecting a settlement nearer £700,000.

The Treasury select committee said yesterday it intends to recall John Kemp-Welch, chairman of the Stock Exchange, to answer questions about the widely different versions of events leading up to Mr Lawrence's dismissal.

Interviewed by MPs on Wednesday, Mr Lawrence had accused Mr Kemp-Welch of slandering him in the back, after giving in to pressure from a cabal of powerful market making firms which had mounted a coup to wrest back control over the Exchange.

Mr Lawrence said he believed he had the full confidence of the Exchange's board, and that there was no warning of his sudden demise, engineered by a tiny fraction of the board's members.

Angered by these claims, it is believed that Mr Kemp-Welch will feel obliged to give more ex-

plicit details of the problems and difficulties associated with Mr Lawrence's management style.

In his first, highly fraught hearing before the Treasury select committee, Mr Kemp-Welch had told MPs that Mr Lawrence's departure had been preceded by a steady erosion of confidence in the chief executive's ability and his management style.

Sir Thomas Arnold, the Conservative chairman of the Treasury committee, said yesterday: "Michael Lawrence said some very strong things, and we feel Mr Kemp-Welch should be given the opportunity to respond." Referring to the different versions of events, Sir Thomas said: "So what is it all about? We need to know."

In their inquiry MPs have been focussing on the powers of the market-making firms which dominate the current share trading system in London as middlemen by offering buy and sell prices. MPs have ques-

tioned whether the privileges accorded these market makers are anti-competitive, and therefore whether the way the stock exchange is run, if the allegations of market making dominance are correct, is itself anti-competitive.

The committee said it intends to call the Treasury to give public evidence on the matter, and will ask the Office of Fair Trading whether – in the light of the controversy – it wants to look again at the activities of the market makers.

The OFT may also be asked to give public evidence. "The key question taking shape in my mind is whether issues of the way the exchange manages itself also raise questions of competition," said Sir Thomas.

"One of the players say the decision making at the Exchange is flawed, and define those flaws, and another lot also says it is flawed, and defines the flaws completely differently. There is a lot to look at here."

IN BRIEF

Business Link problems 'isolated incident'

The problems at Business Link Merseyside that led to the suspension of two senior executives were "an isolated incident" which did not indicate widespread problems in the national network, the Department of Trade and Industry insisted last night. The Liverpool-based organisation confirmed that Peter Burns, chief executive, and Stan Patterson, finance director, had been "suspended as a precautionary measure" pending a review of operations by accountants at KPMG. Deputy prime minister Michael Heseltine, who launched Business Links three years ago while president of the board of trade, would not comment.

Amex and Microsoft sign Internet deal

Microsoft and American Express have signed a licensing agreement for software allowing secure payments on the Internet. Online transactions with American Express cards will use Microsoft's version of the Secure Electronic Transactions protocol. This will provide encrypted communications worldwide.

SKB cuts 400 jobs across Europe

SmithKline Beecham, the drugs group, announced a major restructuring of its manufacturing network in Europe involving the loss of 400 jobs, the closure of five plants and the reduction in size of a further two. Two plants in France and others in Italy and Spain will shut. Those at Crawley in Sussex and Heppington in Belgium are to be "downsized".

Fund manager find £20,000

Rea Brothers (Investment Management) was fined £20,000 yesterday by City watchdog IMRO for allowing overdrafts to occur on client accounts.

Storehouse in £62m stores deal

NIGEL COPE

Storehouse, the Mothercare and BHS retailer, made its first acquisition since the era of Sir Terence Conran yesterday, paying Boots £62.5m for Childrens World, its loss-making out-of-town store chain.

There are 56 branches of Childrens World – but the business has made only one marginal profit since Boots first launched the concept nine years ago. Last year it made an operating profit of £500,000 on sales of £105m but has since slumped back into loss.

Storehouse will change the name to Mothercare and gradually expand the range of toys and equipment such as prams

as well as bulk buys of disposable nappies. Five more stores are due to open this year. "We think we can make a lot of money out of it," the company said.

Storehouse plans to reduce costs by £5m which will include some job losses at the Childrens World head office in Nottingham which employs 137 staff. Storehouse will make a provision of £20m to cover the redundancies and other integration costs.

It is likely that Mothercare may resume its "Mothercare goes up to 10" offer in the out of town stores as there is more space to stock a wider range. Mothercare dropped the older ranges some time ago and has been concentrating on clothes for children up to age seven.

There are 269 branches of Mothercare in the UK almost all on the high street. However, the company has recently opened three stores on out of town retail parks – at Fosse Park, Leicestershire, Chestnut, Herts and Chelmsford in Essex.

Keith Edelman, chief executive of Storehouse, said: "The purchase of Childrens World enables us to speed up the pace of development and gives us out-of-town opportunities."

The deal was applauded in the City which could see benefits on both sides. Sean Eddie, retail analyst at NatWest Securities said: "It is one of those rare birds where everyone is a winner. It is earnings enhancing on both sides."

Boots has removed a long-running dud from its portfolio and achieved a better-than-expected price. Storehouse has picked up a chain of 50 good out-of-town sites which is a rare opportunity given current planning restrictions on out of town stores.

The deal gives Boots the opportunity to concentrate on its core business. However the company has still to come to grips with other under-performers. Do it All, the DIY chain is still losing money and is unlikely to attract a buyer. Fads and Homestyle are also struggling.

Boots shares closed 5p higher at 594p. Storehouse also finished 5p up at 310p.

US agrees to open-skies deal

DAVID USBORNE
New York

Pressure was increased yesterday on Britain to settle its differences with the United States on finalising a new bilateral aviation agreement after Washington signed a sweeping liberalisation agreement with the German government.

The "open-skies" pact promises to end restrictions on passenger and cargo flights between Germany and the United States, granting the airlines of each country access to all destinations in the other and removing other restrictions on capacity, services and code-sharing arrangements.

It remains contingent, however, on the US government agreeing to grant immunity from fair-trading laws to Lufthansa and United Airlines, which plan to extend their already existing code-sharing partnership. Such immunity has already been extended to Northwest Airlines and KLM of the Netherlands.

"The new agreement will open the skies over the Atlantic for German and US airlines and guarantee them the leeway they need to succeed on the transatlantic aviation market," said Germany's Transport Minister, Matthias Wissmann. Both sides

hope to confirm the deal in time for a visit to the White House in April by the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

Attempts by Britain and the US to strike a similar open-skies deal have so far met only frustration. The European Commission for Transport, Neil Kinnock, is against member states negotiating bi-lateral packages, and wants a collective agreement.

The latest UK-US round of talks were aborted by the US side last autumn. A deal with Germany could harm Heathrow's position.

Last month, the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, appealed for a quick resumption of the talks with the United States.

Included in the deal, for example, is a provision to allow carriers to pick and drop off passengers at points beyond the US and Germany. Thus Germany could become a hub for flights by US airlines to Asia. German carriers, meanwhile, would be allowed to fly into the US from other third countries.

Highlights from Standard Life's Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 15 November 1995

The Group

Group assets under management increased over the year by almost £6bn to £44bn with total new premiums amounting to just over £2bn.

Standard Life is exceptionally strong financially – with a 'Triple A' rating from both Standard & Poor's and Moody's – and is more than able to finance all likely future developments whilst retaining its mutual status. It therefore has no plans to demutualise believing strongly that a well-run mutual company should provide better returns to its policyholders than a proprietary company which must be run primarily for the benefit of its shareholders.

With profit policyholders continue to receive excellent returns.

Group development continued with –

- a branch office opened in Frankfurt and distribution agreement signed with Germany's largest life broker,
- a joint venture agreement signed with one of India's premier financial institutions in anticipation of the opening of the marketplace in that country,
- a Representative Office in China opening in Shanghai later this year.

United Kingdom

- ▶ Whilst business flowing from the tie with the Halifax ceased, business from other sources increased in a difficult market.
- ▶ Continued interest from overseas companies in acquiring UK insurers is likely to keep in business a number of companies which might otherwise have left the market.
- ▶ Standard Life is pleased that a consensus is emerging that the regulation of the financial services industry requires urgent change.
- ▶ Guidelines on corporate governance were issued to the Chairmen of the FTSE 100 companies.

Canada

The flow of funds into stocks and bonds, fuelled by the slowdown in the North American economy, contributed to excellent returns from the financial markets.

- ▶ A new range of group savings and retirement products was well received and considerable success was achieved in the individual savings and retirement markets.
- ▶ Overall new business was at record levels.

Republic of Ireland

- ▶ Whilst demand in general has shifted from traditional product lines, sales of pension products has remained strong.
- ▶ Investment in the infrastructure supporting its Irish operations has ensured that the Company can meet the needs of its customers now and in the future.

Spain

- ▶ Premium income increased substantially and further branches were opened across the country.
- ▶ During 1996, Prosperity intends to acquire additional product licences and develop the means to extend its range of insurance and financial products.

The Annual Report and Accounts, including the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 23 April, will be available from Friday, 29 March. Policyholders may obtain a copy by writing to the Customer Information Team at PO Box 141, 1 Tanfield, Edinburgh EH3 5RG or by telephoning (0131) 245 2668. Proxy forms may be similarly obtained by members entitled to vote.

STANDARD LIFE

The Standard Life Assurance Company is a mutual company registered in Scotland (no 524). Head Office: 3 George Street, Edinburgh. Tel: (0131) 225 2552. The Standard Life marketing group includes Standard Life Pension Funds Limited, Standard Life Trust Management Limited, Standard Life Fund Management Limited.

*Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority. †Regulated by IMRO.

THE SECURITIES AND FUTURES AUTHORITY "Rolling Spot Forex" Business A message for investors

As of today March 1st 1996, firms offering "rolling spot forex" dealing services should have applied for authorisation under the Financial Services Act.

- ◆ If you are a customer of one of these firms you can check if it has applied for authorisation by calling SFA's Information Line on 01426 944403
- ◆ If the firm you are dealing with is not included in that Information Line you should contact the Securities and Investments Board on 0171 636 1240 immediately.
- ◆ The Information Line will be updated once applications have been processed.
- ◆ Until authorisation is granted, you will not enjoy the protections offered by the Financial Services Act, such as the investors compensation scheme.

Notice issued by the Securities and Futures Authority, Cottons Centre, Cottons Lane, London SE1 2QB.

SFA is responsible for regulating members of all the organised City investment markets, i.e. the stock market, eurobond, financial futures, commodity futures markets and also corporate finance specialists and off market traders. Around 1,350 firms are regulated by SFA.

Sir Ron must solve the 16-plus education riddle

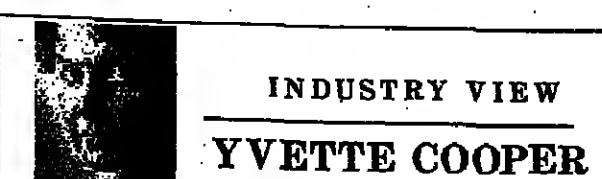
Ask passers-by in the street how much change they would get from a fiver for a sandwich costing £1.24, and one in six of them will have trouble working it out. According to the Basic Skills Agency, many adults have serious literacy and numeracy problems.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Policy-makers across the political spectrum agree that something needs to be done to improve the skills of the British workforce. The question is how to do it. The government's current strategy is to encourage employers to provide training, but this is not always the best way to do it.

Last week the Government announced that Sir Ron Dearing is to lead a review of the funding and structure of higher education, to come up with a better way to finance the expansion of universities.

Two days later it emerged that Labour had abandoned its long-standing proposal to introduce a training levy on all employers who did not provide a critical amount of in-house training. Instead they are considering tax relief for individuals and employers who contribute to individual learning accounts.

The search is on for a fair and effective way to develop post-16 education. The current system falls on both counts. Many individuals do not acquire the skills that they and the economy need. Meanwhile the great



INDUSTRY VIEW

YVETTE COOPER

est subsidy goes to high-earning graduates rather than low-skilled, low-paid people. Individuals, businesses and society as a whole, all gain from post-16 education. The question is how to do it. The government's current strategy is to encourage employers to provide training, but this is not always the best way to do it.

In a paper for the Centre for Economic Performance, economists Richard Layard, Peter Robinson and Hilary Steedman argue that businesses should only pay for training when they are able to capture enough of

Something needs to be done to improve the skills of the workforce

the returns to the investment. They distinguish between "general training" which raises the productivity of employees in every way – and equips them to get better jobs elsewhere – and "firm-specific training", where the productivity gains are particular to the firm and the technology it uses. One serious disadvantage of Labour's old

training levy was that it could not distinguish between general and firm-specific training. Firms that spent a lot of money on training staff to use unique technology would have escaped the levy, despite the fact that the skills they taught were useless in any other employment.

Layard and others argue that employers already provide firm-specific training, and they should not receive any extra subsidy from the state to continue doing so. But not should they be expected to continue to do this

without the support of the state. The academics may be right. Unfortunately little research has been done into the kinds of returns that employers get from training, or into the reasons behind their training decisions. What is clear, however, is that

portable vocational skills which make up general training, that should be up to the individual and the state. The academics may be right. Unfortunately little research has been done into the kinds of returns that employers get from training, or into the reasons behind their training decisions. What is clear, however, is that

employees benefit disproportionately from the kinds of training that firms undertake.

In a new paper for IPPR's Commission on Public Policy and Business, Steve Machin and David Wilkinson have analysed who receives training and who doesn't. In an examination of the Labour Force Survey they discovered that companies educate the well-educated.

In 1994 26 per cent of graduate employees had received training in the previous four years, compared with 18 per cent of those with A-levels or equivalent, 13 per cent of those with GCSEs and 4 per cent of those with no qualifications at all. Moreover, firms train even when employees pick up considerable financial returns as well. Those same highly educated employees who are receiving in-work training also pick up the greatest personal return from the courses they take.

This finding has several consequences for policy-makers. If individuals already have good basic educational skills, then firms seem ready to invest in firm-specific training on their own.

Two problems need to be resolved. The first is ensuring that everyone gets adequate basic education. And the second is finding an effective and fair way to fund the acquisition of additional portable vocational skills.



Sir Ron Dearing: called in by the Government to study the structure and funding of higher education

Ideally basic education should be provided by the school system. But as long as it fails to do so, people also need access to courses at other stages in their lives. Unskilled individuals are unlikely to be able to afford the cost in advance, nor will they see huge wage returns afterwards, given that they are simply catching up with the education others received courtesy of the taxpayer. So the state will have to invest on their behalf instead. And given that there are fewer low-skilled jobs available, investing in the low skilled has the added social benefit of keeping them off the street and out of the dole office.

Another possibility is to force firms to contribute towards general education for unskilled employees. Advocates of Compulsory Learning Accounts argue that employers should be obliged to contribute a certain

percentage of the payroll towards an individual education fund for each member of staff. Firms will inevitably see contributions to general portable skills as another tax on employment. An alternative way to ensure businesses contribute to the skill base they benefit

from is to finance broader education through the general taxation to which businesses already contribute.

But the news is not all bad for the taxpayer. There is even less reason, in the light of the IPPR evidence, to continue with such a huge subsidy to higher education. Going to university doesn't just mean a one-off

boost to your earning power. It also confers access to further training and education throughout your life. So it seems reasonable that graduates should contribute to the education too. Eighteen-year-olds are rarely in a position to stump up several thousand pounds in advance.

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Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.5309	1.5310	1.5310
Canada	2.0001	2.0013	52.345
Germany	2.2950	53.46	1.1
France	77.131	130.0	327.295
Italy	2.2934	68.83	201.444
Spain	15.100	79.3	224.222
UK	1.5270	16.12	43.338
Japan	46.2529	12.9	1.1
Norway	2.8541	66.68	368.278
Netherlands	2.0991	65.67	100.075
Ireland	0.9719	12.7	27.21
Norway	0.9790	106.54	243.366
Spain	18.840	37.47	10.136
Sweden	10.334	7.17	38.49
Switzerland	1.8348	69.63	204.955
Italy	2.0021	3.25	58.77
Hong Kong	11.936	32.65	263.693
Japan	3.9623	0.0	0.0
Norway	2.2738	31.45	196.142
Saudi Arabia	5.246	0.0	0.0
Norway	2.2810	0.0	0.0

sport

FIVE NATIONS COUNTDOWN: England's lineout may be Bristol fashion but some critics argue it is not ship-shape, says Tim Glover

Regan's targeting of Archer is on the line

If there was one area of England's play that was deemed to be in safe hands, it was the second-row partnership of Martin Bayfield and Martin Johnson. The British Lions pair, with a combined weight of 36 stone and if one were placed on the other's shoulders, a height of 13ft 5in, were considered to be the most effective in the Five Nations, perhaps the world.

As England's uninspired season moves unconvincingly to another momentous match against Scotland tomorrow somewhere along the line, or more specifically the lineout, the game plan has gone badly wrong. Following the defeat against France in Paris and the less than satisfying victory over Wales at Twickenham, Bayfield has been singled out as the player most responsible for the team's spectacular underachievement in the lineout.

It is a primary source of possession, carrying more weight in the scheme of things than the scrum, and yet England's lineout has thus far been a disaster area. They play at Murrayfield without Bayfield, something that would have seemed inconceivable at the beginning of

the year. The selection of Garath Archer is a gamble but at least it gives Mark Regan a more familiar target to aim at. He has had all season for Archer practice at Bristol.

Regan has taken even more criticism than Bayfield. "Lightning" Regan has detractors have nicknamed him, on the grounds that he never strikes twice in the same place. Bayfield is 6ft 10ins but Regan has not been able to find him. The impression gained is that if you were picking a darts team, the Bristol hooker would be on the bench.

Jack Rowell has studied and re-studied the videos and if there is a missing link in the lineout it is not, in the England management's view, down to Regan. After the French fiasco Rowell telephoned Regan to offer some much needed advice. "He said that no-one was blaming me and that he had my confidence a hell of a lot," Regan said.

He would have needed another help line after the Wales game. If the lineout was bad against France it was even worse against the Welsh. "All the criticism I've had is definitely unfair," Regan said. "There are three parts to a lineout: the hooker who

has to catch it; and the support players who have to protect him and give him a clean shot at it. In the last two games we haven't done particularly well.

"Against France I saw Martin Bayfield hit, barged and knocked all over the place and he suffered exactly the same against Wales. I threw two pretty bad balls against the Welsh but I was just putting them in the same place I usually do, and Gareth Llewellyn was getting lifted 20 feet in the air. What can I do about that? The next time I threw in I gave the ball a bit more air and it just went clean over the top.

"We need to be a lot more street-wise and we need to train against opposition. When we practised alone we looked fantastic. I put it up and Bayfield caught it every time but in a match it tended to sail over him so there was a problem there somewhere. He didn't seem to be jumping as high but it's an area the whole team has been working at. We've had to build

our confidence again in the lineout, and it's not just down to me. The whole pack has got to live in each other's pockets during a game."

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'The whole pack has got to live in each other's pockets during a game'

England's first two games?"

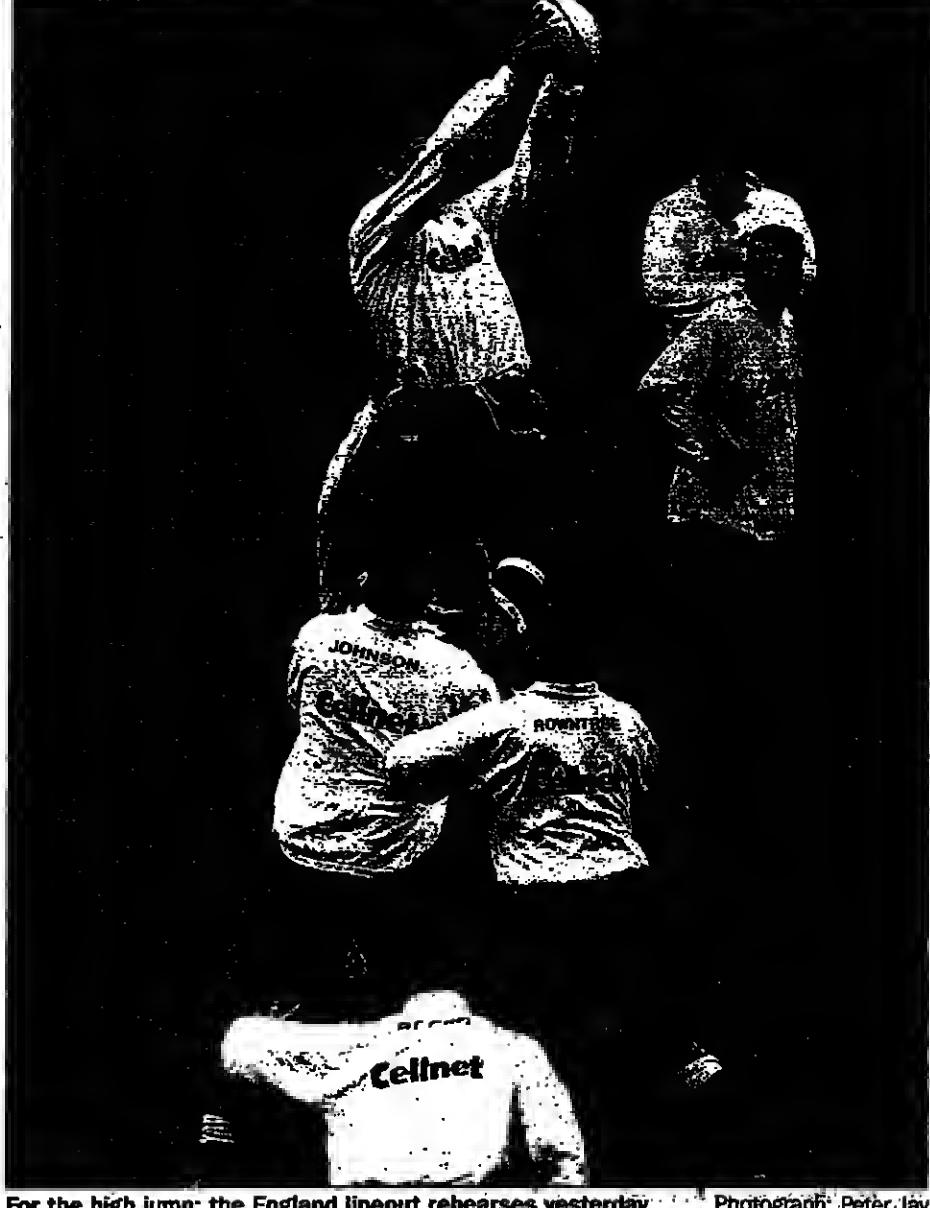
The feeling is that in jungle warfare Bayfield, a policeman who is now described as a professional rugby player, was more a saint than a lion and that Archer, aggressive to the point of belligerence, will not be pushed around. The problem is that Archer, like Martin Johnson, is predominantly a front jumper. "It will be very interesting to see how he fares at number four," Brian Hanlon, Bristol's director of coaching, said.

With Simon Shaw injured, Bristol have been playing Archer in the middle of the lineout. "Mark and Garath have been very effective at club level and their timing has been impeccable," Hanlon said. "They can dominate any game in the lineout. International rugby requires a higher level of concentration but if they can remain focused they can do the job."

"I've had a few chats with Mark about the England performance. He's an extremely accurate thrower who can hit the spot. It's just that sometimes I wonder whether he's been aiming at the right spot. Instead of throwing straight at his man he tends to throw down the middle of the lineout, giving every jumper a 50-50 chance. Against Wales Bayfield's ball was taken by Derwyn Jones and if Mark had thrown any higher it would have missed everything. There was a problem over timing but if Bayfield ended up on his backside or being barged out, that is hardly the fault of Regan."

Some critics think there may be a flaw in Regan's technique but considering that he has been meticulously groomed for this role, a more plausible explanation is that he is suffering by comparison to Brian Moore. No doubt there were many in the RFU hierarchy who were glad to see the back of Moore but Bayfield, for one, will have mourned his retirement. When it came to hitting the bull's eye, Moore was in the Eric Bristow class.

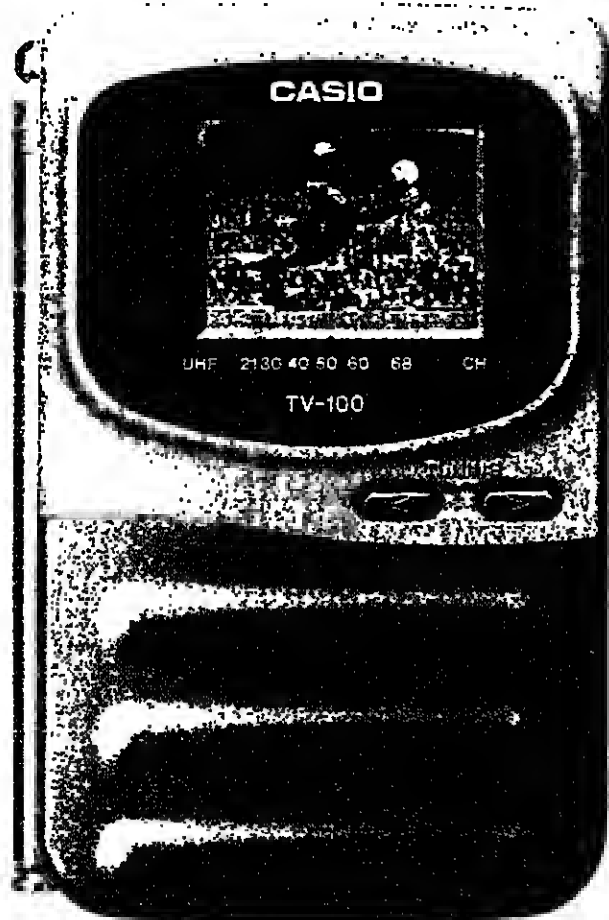
Regan, who is 24, is bigger than Moore and 10 years younger. He was introduced to the game at the age of eight by the Keynsham club and in the England pecking order he has gone through the entire set menu: 16 age group, 18, 20, students, Under-21, emerging players and England A. He made his debut for England A in the 21-20 win over Ireland at Donnybrook last season and established himself as Moore's successor following a successful tour to Australia and Fiji in the summer. And, by profession, Regan is a fork-lift truck driver which, as it happens, is just what England's jumpers need at the moment.



For the high jump: the England lineout rehearses yesterday. Photograph: Peter Jay

"It was the best save I've made this season."

Ken Pringle, Carlisle.



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To hear Richie Dixon talking, you would think that the Scotland selectors sat down at the start of the season and calculatedly wrote off everything that came before the Five Nations Championship as worthless, only if it helped towards this greater goal.

Hence, obviously, the awful performance in achieving a draw with Western Samoa which was treated as a defeat by players and followers alike. Hence, too, the equally desperate defeat by the Italians of a team styled "Scotland A", but the full international side in all but name.

Mind you, this latter debacle – its most pointed statistic being the 1-1 try-count – came only a fortnight before the championship opened and surely not even Dixon, who is just as canny as coach as Jim Telfer is as team manager, imagined that it foreshadowed a march all the way to the Grand Slam.

But if they achieved nothing else, these results lulled the rest of us into such a false sense of security that already Scotland have beaten Ireland, France and Wales – so that when they play England at Murrayfield tomorrow the Grand Slam, Triple

After a calamitous build-up to the championships, the Scots engage England as favourites tomorrow. **Steve Bale reports**

Crown and Calcutta Cup, not forgetting the newish Five Nations trophy, all stand glittering before us. The Scots have entered a 13-strong team, including Franck Gilewski from Biarritz, the former club, Le Chesnay. Last year, Arndt Schmitt beat his fellow German Michael Packer. Both return this time, joined by the rest of Germany's 1995 World Championship team.

How to get there: Metropolitan Police Training School, The Peel Centre, Ascot Road, London, W20 6BA. For details of the match, see page 22. For details of the match, see page 22. For details of the match, see page 22.

In fact it was not like this at all. There was no devilish plot. For one thing, Scotland have a

habit of playing like amateurs – if they will pardon the expression – in these days of open (professional) as well as open (Scottish) rugby before Christmas. The 51-15 thrashing by New Zealand in 1993 was one such example, though perhaps more striking still was the 1994 equivalent when they lost 34-10 to South Africa, because that preceded going three-quarters of the way to a Grand Slam in '95.

Then, the unlikely Scottish advance was finally halted at Twickenham and they were given

a flea in the ear by Brian Moore, now the ex-England hooker, for having the temerity to stop Will Carling's boys playing the fast, loose rugby of which they liked to talk, and still do. How deliciously ironic that it should now be Scotland who have made a thrilling art form of playing fast and loose and that it will be England's choice either to copy the Scots for all time or to stay.

Either way, it is a fascinating prospect, though even Dixon could not have expected his team to have become the role-models of the Five Nations. Indeed, you could argue that all Scotland's first two matches did was assist Telfer and Dixon in resolving who not to pick, though that was clearly no bad thing.

Thus only eight of the team who faced Samoa in November survived to face Ireland two months later or England tomorrow. The subsequent 29-17 defeat in Rieti had three specifically beneficial effects in persuading the selectors to restore Michael Dods on the wing, Ian Smith at open-side flanker and Doddie Weir at lock.

They might have hoped for more line-out ball from Weir, but they could scarcely complain about the other two. Having been restored for his goal-kicking, Dods has not kicked as many as he would have liked but has compensated with three of Scotland's five championship tries. Smith has been the single most important forward in achieving the continuity necessary for the Scots' fluid rugby to function.

After the embarrassment in Italy, the need was not to develop a game plan – Scotland already had one, even if it had not been working – but to develop the confidence to use it. That this has transpired is poignantly demonstrated by the continuing relegation of Craig Chalmers and Gary Armstrong, Lions half-backs both, to the replacements' bench.

It has been said, not least by Telfer himself, that Scotland have been helped by the timetable of their fixtures: to start the championship with Ireland was preferable to starting with anyone else. But let us be fair: at the time (and it is less than six weeks ago), the Scots did not have a prayer wherever they went. How wrong we all were; how glad to be so.

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JUST THE TICKET: a guide to what's on where for the sporting spectator

PICK OF THE DAY

THIS WEEKEND/Fencing Men's World Cup épée, Henden

The British round of the men's épée World Cup, held this weekend in Henden, north-west London, promises to be the toughest since the last Olympic. With the Olympic Games only four months away, many internationalists are still competing for the last individual places, and the London round is the penultimate qualifying event. Quentin Bernier, considered the most talented home product of his generation, leads the British team.

THIS WEEKEND

TODAY

BOWLING: English Women's Indoor Championship, Southampton. Play starts on the opening day at 10am. Day and night matches. Admission: £2.50 per day. Venue: Park, Southampton. Tel: 01703 621181.

COMING: Scottish Gaelic Football, Perth. Play starts at 10am. The first play-off is at 10.30am. The women's first play-off is at 10.30am. The men's first play-off is at 10.30am. Venue: Perth. Tel: 01738 621181.

SWIMMING: British National Long Course Championships, Horden. Play starts at 10am. Day and night matches. Admission: £2.50 per day. Venue: Horden. Tel: 01738 621181.

TENNIS: ITA women's Challenger (Southampton). Play starts at 10am. The first play-off is at 10.30am. The women's first play-off is at 10.30am. The men's first play-off is at 10.30am. Venue: Southampton. Tel: 01738 621181.

WRESTLING: British National Long Course Championships, Horden. Play starts at 10am. Day and night matches. Admission: £2.50 per day. Venue: Horden. Tel: 01738 621181.

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Birmingham gained valuable experience from years of training with the French, and will be returning to their native Wales. France has entered a 13-strong team, including Franck Gilewski from Biarritz, the former club, Le Chesnay. Last year, Arndt Schmitt beat his fellow German Michael Packer. Both return this time, joined by the rest of Germany's 1995 World Championship team.

How to get there: Metropolitan Police Training School, The Peel Centre, Ascot Road, London, W20 6BA. For details of the match, see page 22. For details of the match, see page 22. For details of the match, see page 22.

In fact it was not like this at all. There was no devilish plot. For one thing, Scotland have a habit of playing like amateurs – if they will pardon the expression – in these days of open (professional) as well as open (Scottish) rugby before Christmas. The 51-15 thrashing by New Zealand in 1993 was one such example, though perhaps more striking still was the 1994 equivalent when they lost 34-10 to South Africa, because that preceded going three-quarters of the way to a Grand Slam in '95.

Then, the unlikely Scottish advance was finally halted at Twickenham and they were given a flea in the ear by Brian Moore, now the ex-England hooker, for having the temerity to stop Will Carling's boys playing the fast, loose rugby of which they liked to talk, and still do. How deliciously ironic that it should now be Scotland who have made a thrilling art form of playing fast and loose and that it will be England's choice either to copy the Scots for all time or to stay.

Either way, it is a fascinating prospect, though even Dixon could not have expected his team to have become the role-models of the Five Nations. Indeed, you could argue that all Scotland's first two matches did was assist Telfer and Dixon in resolving who not to pick, though that was clearly no bad thing.

Thus only eight of the team who faced Samoa in November survived to face Ireland two months later or England tomorrow. The subsequent 29-17 defeat in Rieti had three specifically beneficial effects in persuading the selectors to restore Michael Dods on the wing, Ian Smith at open-side flanker and Doddie Weir at lock.

They might have hoped for more line-out ball from Weir, but they could scarcely complain about the other two. Having been restored for his goal-kicking, Dods has not kicked as many as he would have liked but has compensated with three of Scotland's five championship tries. Smith has been the single most important forward in achieving the continuity necessary for the Scots' fluid rugby to function.

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After the embarrassment in Italy, the need was not to develop a game plan – Scotland already had one, even if it had not been working – but to develop the confidence to use it. That this has transpired is poignantly demonstrated by the continuing relegation of Craig Chalmers and Gary Armstrong, Lions half-backs both, to the replacements' bench.

It has been said, not least by Telfer himself, that Scotland have been helped by the timetable of their fixtures: to start the championship with Ireland was preferable to starting with anyone else. But let us be fair: at the time (and it is less than six weeks ago), the Scots did not have a prayer wherever they went. How wrong we all were; how glad to be so.

Compiled by Paul Maher

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Dwyer's Cheltenham hopes hit by whip ban

Racing
GREG WOOD

It is not a remedy that you will find in a medical textbook, but the sight of Alderton winning at Kempton last weekend - with someone else holding the reins - seems to have significantly accelerated Norman Williamson's recovery from a shoulder injury. The champion hurdler's regular jockey will return to the saddle at Newbury this afternoon, and with less than two weeks left to the Cheltenham Festival, Williamson must try hard to forget the old saying that misfortunes come in threes.

After his victories in the Gold Cup and Champion Hurdle last season, Kim Bailey's stable jockey was expected to consolidate his new position to riding's elite during the current campaign. So far, though, he has simply had plenty of time to catch up on his reading. A fall at Sedgemoor in October left him with a broken neck, and in Britain, on Eskimo Nel in the Tote Gold Trophy at Newbury

in February, he dislocated his right shoulder in a fall at the fifth fence.

Cyrus the Great will be the vehicle as Williamson attempts to end his dreadful run of bad luck in the last race on today's card, a juvenile novice hurdle. "I saw a specialist last night and he was happy for me to return," Williamson said yesterday. "If the shoulder comes out again I will have to be operated on, but I'll just be trying to stay off the ground. I'm just having one ride and I might have a couple on Saturday. We'll just have to see how I get on."

Williamson's luck was no better at the Festival two years ago, when a suspension forced him to watch Fluke Drive, one of his regular mounts, winning the Champion Hurdle under Mark Dwyer. This year, however, it is Dwyer who will be a spectator on the first day at Cheltenham, after he was banned for three days 9.11 and 12 March, by the stewards at Nottingham. The officials decided that Dwyer had used his whip with unreasonable frequency with Master Nove, runner up by just a head to Baronet

when 11-8 favourite for the card's opening hurdle.

"I won't appeal as there's no point," Dwyer said later. "It's the first time I've ever been in trouble over misuse of the whip in Britain, though I have been suspended twice in Ireland. It was disappointing not to get just two days as it was my first offence over here and that would have meant not missing the first day of Cheltenham."

Chris Pinnott, Dwyer's agent, said: "At this stage he did not have a confirmed Champion Hurdle mount. It would have been much worse if this ban had affected the other two days of the Festival when he has some really good rides."

A jockey in a better mood was Andrew Thornton, who rode a winner at Ludlow and avoided considerable embarrassment in the process. At the 14th fence in the handicap chase, Thornton's mount Marmur and Tony McCoy, riding Rectory Garden, jumped together, but McCoy seemed sure to hit the deck when his mount made a bad mistake. Thornton, though, reached the finish unhindered, having been shortening by the day.

"Tony was going out of the back and side door," Thornton said. "And he needed something to grab hold of. It was funny, but it wouldn't have been if he'd beaten me."

Master Oats beat 14 rivals in last year's Gold Cup, but one trainer at least is hoping that rather fewer runners go to post for this year's renewal. General Rusty has not run since his success in the Cheltenham Gold Cup at Kempton in mid-October and his official rating does not put him within three stones of One Man, but unlike many of the other entries, Charlie Mann's colt has confirmed lover of fast ground.

"We will leave him in the Gold Cup just in case it is fast," Mann said yesterday. "Then the likes of Master Oats, Monsieur Le Cure and Imperial Call would come out and it might become just a five or six runner race. It's a long shot but you never know."

In fact, with clear skies over much of Britain and the track at Cheltenham untouched since early December, the odds on Marmur getting his wish are shortening by the day.

Cigar's heat subsides to allow training

Cigar's trainer, Bill Mott, believes that America's Horse of 1995 will be able to resume training tomorrow after bruising his off-fore foot in Florida last week.

Cigar has made good progress since the setback but

was unable to resume training on Wednesday due to heat in the affected hoof.

Mott has expressed the need to get at least two pieces of work into the horse before 15 March in order to have any chance of making the Dubai World Cup

line-up at Nad Al Sheba on 27 March.

The setback has already cost the connections of Cigar \$2m as he was unable to contest the Santa Anita Handicap last weekend. The bonus is for winning that race, the Holly-

wood Gold Cup and the Pacific Classic, provided each runner attracts at least six runners.

Cigar is on a winning streak of 13 and was an impressive winner of the Grade One Donn Handicap at Gulfstream Park earlier this month.

NEWBURY

2.00 Sir Leonard
3.00 Tartan Moss
3.30 Bella Life (nb)
3.50 MISTER ODDY (nap)

GOING: Good to Soft (Soft places).
Left-hand, galloping course, with stiff fences.
Racecourse is well-drained and the ground is good. (Paddock) conditions course. ADVERTISEMENT: Members £10; Tartan Moss £5; Sir Leonard £5; MISTER ODDY £5; Bella Life £5.

LEADING TRAINERS WITH RUNNERS: Mrs M. B. Blevins - 11 winners from 134 runs; Mrs M. B. Blevins - 11 winners from 134 runs; Mrs M. B. Blevins - 11 winners from 134 runs.

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HYPERION

4.00 Colonel Kelly
4.30 Fantastic Fleet
5.00 Hand Woven

GOING: Good to Soft (Soft places).
Left-hand, galloping course, with stiff fences.
Racecourse is well-drained and the ground is good. (Paddock) conditions course. ADVERTISEMENT: Members £10; Tartan Moss £5; Sir Leonard £5; MISTER ODDY £5; Bella Life £5.

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FORM GUIDE

BELLA LIFE: mares, plenty of appeal with the testing ground on much in his favour. And he has been in the right place as demonstrated in a hurdle at Cheltenham in December when he beat Irish mares New Co, who went on to win his name on the card.

At Cheltenham, Bella Life has been highly rated on three chasing attempts - the winners being Chatterbox, the Lure, the Ribber and Call it a Day. But he has been gaining experience and showing on the company in a hurdle given him a more realistic chance. Bella Life is more exposed and is still inclined to make jumping errors. He did not do his best last time, but he has been handicapped even with 11st 10lb, but Ocean Leader is preferred after creditable success to King Lear at Nottingham and Ulu Val at Fallowfield. With just 10st 10lb, Ocean Leader is the one Bella Life has to overcome. Master Paul may be found out in the longer after his Fallowfield win and the odds have a bit to find on what they have achieved so far.

Selection: BELLA LIFE

3.30 GEOFFREY GILBY HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,100

1. 25.11.95 JAMES THE FIRST (2) (nb) 11st 10lb 11.11.95 JAMES THE FIRST (2) (nb) 11st 10lb 11.11.95 JAMES THE FIRST (2) (nb) 11st 10lb

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19. 25.11.95 JAMES THE FIRST (2) (nb) 11st 10lb 11.11.95 JAMES THE FIRST (2) (nb)

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